Jagdish Prasad Mandal: A Biography

Life, Literature and the Living Soul of Mithila

Original Maithili Biography
by

Gajendra Thakur

JAGDISH PRASAD MANDAL: EKTA BIOGRAPHY

Written originally in Maithili

by

Gajendra Thakur

Jagdish Prasad Mandal: A Biography

Translated into English

by

Gajendra Thakur

JAGDISH PRASAD MANDAL: A BIOGRAPHY

Life, Literature and the Living Soul of Mithila

Original Maithili Biography
by

Gajendra Thakur

Translated into English from the original Maithili

Gajendra Thakur

JAGDISH PRASAD MANDAL: A BIOGRAPHY

English Translation of
Jagdish Prasad Mandal: Ekta Biography
Author: Gajendra Thakur
Translated into English by the Author
©Gajendra Thakur/ Preeti Thakur
ISBN: 978-93-5943-043-0

Jagdish Prasad Mandal: A Biography, originally written in Maithili and translated into English by Gajendra Thakur, is a serious and insightful study of the life, social formation, and literary stature of one of the most important voices in modern Maithili literature. Born on 5 July 1947 in Berma, Mithila, Shri Jagdish Prasad Mandal came of age in the turbulent landscape of post-independence India, where political freedom had been achieved but remained incomplete in the everyday realities of villages, farmers, labourers, and marginalised communities.

The biography situates Mandalji's life within the broader social and cultural world of rural Mithila, including its agrarian traditions, caste hierarchies, land struggles, educational aspirations, political awakening, and moral resilience. It traces his journey as a farmer deeply rooted in labour, a participant in public movements, a thinker shaped by economic realities, and a writer whose stories, novels, poems, and plays brought ordinary people and neglected lives to the centre of literary discourse.

Through places and movements such as Berma, Jhanjharpur, the Bhoodan movement, the struggle over land rights, and Rampatti Jail, the book demonstrates how lived experience evolved into social vision and literary commitment. More than a personal narrative, it stands as both a biography and a significant document of Mithila's living consciousness.

First Edition: 2026

Font Source: https://fonts.google.com

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, adapted, paraphrased, stored in a retrieval system, or processed in any form or by any means, including electronic, mechanical, digital, or artificial intelligence systems, without the prior written permission of the copyright holder .

Contents

Preface

BIRTH AND BACKGROUND

AFTER 1960: THE FORMATIVE YEARS

AFTER 1967: POLITICAL AWAKENING AND SOCIAL COMMITMENT

THE STRUCTURE OF CASTE

BEFORE THE DURGA STHAN WAS BUILT IN BERMA

LIFE WITHOUT A DIARY

THE BHOODAN MOVEMENT AND THE QUESTION OF LAND

RAMPATTI JAIL

A MEMORY FROM HIGH SCHOOL

Preface

☰

A meaningful biography does not merely place a life between two dates. It listens to the pulse of an age, enters the inner world of a region, traces the moral journey of an individual, and asks how a single life becomes inseparable from the history of a people. I have written Jagdish Prasad Mandal: A Biography in that spirit. My purpose has not simply been to present the outward sequence of events in the life of Shri Jagdish Prasad Mandal, but to understand how a child born in a village of Mithila in the year of India's independence grew into a socially committed thinker, a farmer rooted in labour, a participant in public struggles, and one of the most original and significant creative voices in modern Maithili literature.

The present volume is the English translation of my original Maithili biography, Jagdish Prasad Mandal: Ekta Biography. In this case, translation is not a secondary act performed at a distance from the original vision; it is my own re-entry into a life I first narrated in Maithili. The English version therefore carries both memory and responsibility. It introduces to a wider readership not only the life of Mandalji, but also the social world from which that life drew its strength. Readers approaching this book from outside Mithila will encounter not only an individual life, but also a rare record of rural society, agrarian culture, caste relations, linguistic consciousness, political awakening, and literary transformation.

While preparing this biography, I remained guided by one fundamental principle: a life story becomes authentic only when it is heard, examined, verified, and clarified in the light of truth. Without such scrutiny, biography risks slipping into anecdote; with it, it approaches history. This book has been shaped by that

discipline. It draws upon conversations, recollections, local knowledge, and the corroboration of facts wherever possible. Its method is neither ornamental nor detached; it proceeds from within the social world it describes. I belong to the wider cultural landscape of Berma, and this proximity has enabled me to understand the rhythms of the region, the meanings embedded in its idioms, the force of its memories, and the deeper social significance of incidents that may appear minor to an outsider.

Shri Jagdish Prasad Mandal was born on 5 July 1947, at a moment when India stood on the threshold of freedom. The timing is more than a biographical coincidence. His birth belongs to the borderland between colonial rule and political independence, between entrenched feudal structures and the promise of democracy, between inherited hierarchies and emerging aspirations. The India into which he was born had not yet resolved its contradictions. The freedom movement had awakened the masses, yet famine, earthquake, caste tension, communal division, poverty, and land conflict continued to shape the lives of ordinary people. The tricolour had been unfurled, but for millions of rural citizens, freedom still had to be translated into land, livelihood, dignity, education, and justice.

This historical tension forms the first major background of the biography. Mandalji's life cannot be understood apart from the social transition of post-independence India. I have not presented freedom as a single victorious event after which all questions were settled. Rather, I have tried to show how the promise of freedom entered village life unevenly. Elections were held, governments formed, new laws introduced, schools and colleges established, and political parties moved from towns into villages. Yet old hierarchies, land disputes, moneylending, caste divisions, administrative partiality, and agrarian distress continued to weigh heavily upon the people. Mandalji's life unfolded within this unfulfilled freedom, and his later literary and social commitments were rooted in that historical incompleteness.

The second vital ground of this biography is Berma, together with the wider Jhanjharpur region. Berma is not treated here as a mere birthplace; it becomes a living social organism. Its ponds,

wells, schools, kachaharis, caste groups, fields, orchards, shrines, teachers, storytellers, and public workers create the human environment in which Mandalji's sensibility was formed. I have tried to place the village within its larger cultural geography. Jhanjharpur, Navani, Deep, Kachhubi, Tamuria, Lohna, and the neighbouring areas appear not as names on a map, but as centres of memory, movement, education, and social difference. Through them, the reader enters rural Mithila in its full complexity.

One of my concerns in this biography has been to present the village neither as an object of romance nor as a place to be dismissed. Berma appears here as a place of labour, intelligence, conflict, mutual dependence, hardship, humour, discipline, and moral testing. It is a village marked by educational aspiration and political awareness. It is also a village where land, caste, family obligation, and collective prestige shape life at every step. The reader encounters a society in which people may be poor but are not without thought; bound by custom but not without self-respect; divided by caste yet still joined by kinship, labour, necessity, and shared memory. This social world gives Mandalji's life its depth and his literature its truth.

The third major axis of the book is the reality of caste, land, labour, and peasant life. Mandalji's life cannot be separated from the soil. Agriculture, sharecropping, grain-lending, debt, wages, flood, drought, irrigation, small holdings, and the moral economy of the village are not background details; they are central forces. I have tried to record a world in which land was not only property, but also power, honour, survival, and conflict. The sharecropper, the small farmer, the farm labourer, the landholder, the moneylender, and the political worker all stand within the same field of tension.

The question of land is especially significant in this biography. It moves through the afterlife of zamindari, the struggles over bakast land, the ambiguities of sharecropping, the distortions of the Bhoodan movement, and the legal entanglements that followed. Bhoodan, which began with moral aspiration, became in many places a source of confusion and manipulation when certificates for the same land were issued to different persons

and disputes multiplied. I have tried not to write history through slogans, but to follow the concrete consequences of policies and movements as they entered village life.

Similarly, caste is not presented merely as a social category. It appears as a lived structure that shapes politics, marriage, occupation, dignity, leadership, religious practice, and public mobilisation. I have tried to show how the class-based character of politics often failed to develop because caste identities deepened and hardened. Yet the narrative also reveals that social change did not follow simple lines. The Communist movement, the question of land, the demand for the Kosi canal, and the recognition of the Maithili language all entered a society already layered by caste and custom. Mandalji's growth as a public figure took place in this difficult field, where every social question carried economic, cultural, and political dimensions.

The fourth axis is struggle. Mandalji does not emerge here as a contemplative figure detached from public life. He is seen walking, arguing, organising, observing, facing setbacks, learning, and returning to the people. The chapters dealing with political awakening, social commitment, Bhoodan, land conflict, and Rampatti Jail are essential to the structure of this biography. They show that his thought was not formed in isolation. It was tested in the village, in meetings, in party work, in disputes, in jail, in the presence of ordinary people, and amid the unfinished demands of the region.

Rampatti Jail occupies a symbolic place in this life story. The movement that led Mandalji and others there was not limited to one narrow demand. It brought together questions of agriculture, hydroelectric power, the Kosi canal, regional development, and the official recognition of Maithili. Here, local struggle becomes inseparable from the larger destiny of Mithila. The demand for water, electricity, industry, and language recognition was, at heart, a demand for dignity. It was a refusal to let Mithila remain trapped in backwardness while its people possessed labour, memory, culture, and intelligence in abundance.

I have also tried to record something more subtle: the making of Mandalji's intellectual temperament. A high-school memory

becomes significant when economics grips his mind and later leads him toward wider readings, from Marx's Das Kapital to the works of Amartya Sen. This detail is not incidental. It reveals the formation of a mind that would never separate village life from economic structures. Mandalji's later writing shows precisely this quality. He does not see poverty as fate, nor does he treat rural hardship as sentimental material. He asks how systems work, how labour is valued, how society becomes distorted, and how people can regain agency.

This brings us to the fifth, and perhaps most important, axis of the book: the emergence of a literary personality from life-struggle. Mandalji's literature was not born from withdrawal; it arose from participation. His stories, novels, poems, and plays carry the smell of soil, the anxiety of farmers, the speech of working people, the dignity of women, the pain of migration, the wounds of caste, and the stubborn hope of rural society. I have elsewhere argued that the arrival of Jagdish Prasad Mandal on the literary scene marks a turning point in Maithili literature. I do not say this as praise alone. It points to a genuine shift in subject, voice, and social representation.

Before Mandalji, much of what passed as mainstream Maithili literature did not fully enter the lived tragedies of the rural poor, the marginalised, the farmer, the labourer, the small household, and the socially silenced. Mandalji corrected this imbalance. He brought into literature those lives that had long remained present in society but absent from literary centrality. He did so not through pity, but through knowledge. His characters are not objects of sympathy. They think, endure, argue, work, fall, rise, and search for solutions. His prose does not decorate facts; facts move through it as part of lived experience. His literature does not lament helplessly; it confronts reality and keeps moving.

The truth of Mandalji's literature lies in the unity of thought, life, and writing. He respected every stratum of society not as an abstract principle, but as part of his lived world. The farmer, artisan, labourer, teacher, widow, child, elder, village reformer, and struggling family all enter his work with their own dignity. This is why his writing feels organic. It does not impose ideology upon

life; it draws meaning from the life already present before him. In this sense, his literature becomes an ethical extension of his personality.

This biography seeks to help the reader understand that extension. It shows how the child who lost his father early, grew within a joint family and a dense social network, experienced village education, saw the contradictions of independence, entered political and social struggles, and witnessed caste, land, and labour conflicts from close quarters eventually became a writer whose creative world could not be separated from Mithila's common people. Mandalji's literary strength lies in the fact that his imagination is socially accountable. He writes not about a village invented from nostalgia, but about a village known through labour, conflict, affection, and responsibility.

A serious biography of a regional writer must not erase the region in order to appear universal. On the contrary, the universal meaning of such a life emerges only when its local truth is preserved. This is what I have tried to keep in view while writing Jagdish Prasad Mandal: A Biography. Mithila is not a marginal literary geography; it is a civilisational field where language, land, caste, labour, memory, and moral struggle meet. Through Mandalji's life, the book opens a larger question: how does literature become the voice of a people who have lived history but have not always been allowed to write it?

I believe the English translation is timely. It invites readers beyond Maithili to encounter Mandalji not merely as a regional figure, but as a writer whose rootedness gives him wider relevance. In an age when migration, agrarian distress, ecological imbalance, cultural displacement, and social inequality continue to trouble societies across the world, Mandalji's life and literature speak with renewed force. He reminds us that true modernity cannot be built by abandoning the village, humiliating labour, or cutting language away from its people. Development without dignity, education without social responsibility, and literature without lived experience remain incomplete.

I would ask the reader to approach this book patiently. Its value lies not only in the facts it provides, but also in the world it

seeks to restore. It restores the intimate relationship between biography and social history. It restores the dignity of rural experience. It restores the connection between language and life. It restores the idea that a writer's responsibility is not merely to produce books, but to keep one eye on society and the other on pen and paper. Such a vision is deeply Maithili, yet also universal.

This biography offers the life of Shri Jagdish Prasad Mandal as a journey from personal struggle to collective meaning. It begins with a child born in 1947 and moves toward a writer whose work participates in the moral and literary awakening of Mithila. Between these two points lies the story of a village, a region, a society, and a language seeking justice, dignity, and self-recognition. To read this biography is to understand that some lives cannot be confined to the individual. They become fields of memory. They become mirrors of society. They become literature even before they are written.

Jagdish Prasad Mandal: A Biography is one such work of remembrance, understanding, and responsibility. It deserves to be read not only as the life of a writer, but as the living document of a people whose labour, speech, struggle, and hope continue to shape the soul of Mithila.

- **Gajendra Thakur**

BIRTH AND BACKGROUND

☰

Jagdish Prasad Mandal was born on 5 July 1947, when India stood on the threshold of independence and the British were preparing to leave.

"I was born on 5 July 1947. The family was well settled and reasonably prosperous. For three generations, it had remained a single-lineage household. As the grandfather had been, so was the father. Since there was a pond and a well near the house, there was no difficulty regarding water."

The family lived in close association not only with his parents but also with the household of his elder sister. They owned some land of their own and also cultivated, on a sharecropping basis, the fields of absentee landlords in the village. As a result, there was no shortage of food or basic necessities. On the one hand, the family possessed the inherited strength and cohesion of its lineage; on the other, Jagdish Prasad Mandal's father had been shaped by social and familial influences that gave him a somewhat progressive outlook.

Just as, at a community feast, the elders understand that once the bari is served, the meal has entered its final round, and that there is little point in waiting because delay may leave one hungry, it is wiser to push forward and eat quickly, for otherwise whom could one blame? In much the same way, British rule too was gathering up its belongings and preparing to depart. The turbulent movement that arose in 1942 did not subside; instead, it grew fiercer and fiercer, culminating in the independence of 15 August 1947.

Yet the condition of the country was far from unified.

Conflicts persisted everywhere. In some places there was caste violence; in others, communal hostility. Somewhere the struggle centred on wealth and property, elsewhere on honour and dignity. Even as the freedom movement gathered strength, the country's economic condition had already been deeply affected by the Bengal famine and by the Bihar earthquake of 1934.

In the struggle for independence, Mithilanchal's contribution was no less significant than that of any other region of the country. On one side stood the old custodians of inherited ways of thinking. On the other, after 1940, the Socialist Party and the Communist Party continued to generate new political ideas. A wave of awareness moved through society. Just as the Socialist Party advanced with its programmes, so did the Communist Party. The first group from Darbhanga district had already taken party membership in 1939–40 and had emerged as committed workers. The Socialist Party, too, had reached village after village.

The people's movement of 1942 struck a blow against hereditary ways of thinking. That blow caused cracks and ruptures in old ideas, and even those shaken by it came forward with a new outlook. The social environment had already created the belief that the zamindari system would surely end, kings and feudal chiefs would fall, and the old practice of auctioning land, along with the oppression involved in collecting land revenue, would be wiped out. New ideas had already taken root among the people.

Within Mithilanchal, the Jhanjharpur region had its own standing in both education and the economy. By national standards, this region was not backward; it was advanced. It had produced one great personality after another. It was also an area that had shed blood in the freedom struggle. Jhanjharpur was one of the main centres of British authority. Wherever the policy of repression was enforced, it was enforced in this region as well.

Within Mithilanchal, Jhanjharpur is the region where the history and vision of Mithila still shine forth. Even today, flowers seem to bloom from stone, and fragrance remains alive in the earth and water. In the village society of this region, dozens of castes and communities have lived together in one place from ancient times to the present. The soil, too, is remarkably fertile, and the region is

among the most densely populated in the country.

The fifth decade of the twentieth century stirred the country so deeply that people moved beyond the limits of home and family and offered themselves to the nation. Just as the first half of the decade was spent in movements and agitation, many questions also arose and stood before the country. Yet in the nation's history until then, such collective joy had never been seen as was witnessed at that time. As the day for the unfurling of the flag of freedom drew nearer, that joy continued to grow. Half the decade had passed in awakening, and the remaining half passed in happiness, in dreams of many colours.

In society at large, this may not have been so clear, but in national politics the economic question had created a definite division. Some saw independence as the country's complete freedom; others regarded it as crippled freedom. Within the country, drought, earthquake, caste frenzy, and communal frenzy had gathered such force that political parties remained entangled in struggles both within and outside themselves. The Telangana struggle had already entered the map of the country's movements. Every divisive force behind the Partition of India and Pakistan was shaking the public mind. Hearts that had remained joined through ten years of imprisonment were breaking apart among companions. They had been together in the Cellular Jail of Kala Pani, but their villages and societies had become divided.

After midnight on 14 August, on 15 August, the tricolour was unfurled. British rule came to an end.

The wave of joy in people's hearts had not yet settled when Gandhiji was shot in broad daylight in the capital, an event that revealed the nature of power with painful clarity. The Constituent Assembly began drafting the Constitution. The Constitution was framed, and from 1952 the process of general elections began. Elections were held to form governments in the states and at the Centre, and new governments came into being.

British rule had certainly given the country an expanded political shape, but it had also left it entangled in thousands of problems. The new government found itself facing countless difficulties. In village after village, the struggle over bakast land

had spread. Since all political parties gave it one-sided support, the struggle also succeeded.

In 1950, Jagdish Prasad Mandal's father passed away.

"I have no memory of my father's death, only the sight of the funeral fire burning in the orchard. I was three years old then. Of the two brothers, my elder brother was six. Father remained ill for about a month. There was no proper arrangement for treatment; Darbhanga hospital had not yet come into existence. In society, treatment ranged from exorcism and ritual healing to herbs and roots."

Since the joint-family system was strong, there was no deficiency in the child's upbringing after the father's death.

"It was not like the families of today, where neither the son looks after his father and mother, nor do the parents look after the son and daughter-in-law. There are many reasons for this, but if we cannot even take responsibility for our own family, then we merely go on calling our motherland and our country great for nothing. With honesty, placing one's hand upon the heart, one must ask: what have we given, and what have we taken?

If something did not happen in my case, I am not to blame for it. On one side were the members of my own family, and on the other, there was no caste in the village with which we did not have a family relationship. Besides, our caste itself had a large settlement. In the villages surrounding our own, there were kinship ties as well, and they continue even today. People from those places used to come and go at agreed times.

The company, too, was good. There were storytellers of the finest kind and people who could hold a conversation with rare skill. Thus, there was hardly any difference between day and night. There was no want in the family, and therefore the circumstances remained favourable."

Since circumstances were favourable, Jagdish Prasad Mandalji's attention also turned towards the future of the family. His elder brother had already been married. In those days, marriages took place when children were only four or five years old.

"Among seven brothers and sisters, my aunt was the eldest and my mother the youngest. That aunt became a widow. She had only two daughters, and her family line came to an end. My aunt had influence over my mother, and so my elder brother was married when he was only five. When the family began to think of the future, their eyes fell upon me. The condition of a bedridden patient is such that nothing can be said with certainty; he may live, or he may die. In such a condition, honesty naturally enters one's thoughts."

At Machhadi, in Simra, the family of the dadiya sasur was well settled. That elder in-law's kinship was with the aunt's family at Godhanpur, and so the aunt kept coming to her sister's place at Berma.

"The dadiya sasur found a way and began coming with Bachai Mandal, the younger brother of the uncle from Godhanpur. My aunt, who knew no deceit or intrigue, told my mother everything. Keeping in mind the propriety between elders and younger ones, Mother gave an assurance: 'At present, he himself is lying ill. There is no certainty about fate and Providence. So nothing can be said now; it will be considered later.'"

From a practical point of view, the family of Machhadi was somewhat modest in standing. There were many palm and date trees there, and the practice of drinking tari existed in that village. The old man, the dadiya sasur, arrived with a pair of dhotis and a chadar, and stayed in Berma until the last moments of the father's life. On the final night of his death, even while the small lamp was burning, everyone felt as though darkness had fallen.

"The voice that had been alive became silent. Father's hands and feet stopped moving."

Calling the mother near him, the old man, the dadiya sasur, addressed the uncle from Godhanpur and said:

"Samadhiji, give this child to me. I shall give him my granddaughter even if she has to make cow-dung cakes."

Like a proposal placed before a meeting, the uncle from Godhanpur supported him and said:

"This is a matter within the family. Where is the need for any

'yes' or 'no' in this?"

Just then, the aunt intervened:

"Sister, he is still a small child. Give him the child. At the age of three itself, the talk of marriage was settled."

"Until then, there had been no practice in our family of milking cows ourselves, ploughing fields ourselves, or castrating calves at the cattle-post. Even after Father's death, I reached school on time. There was a lower primary school in the village. Since the building was made of mud walls, it had collapsed in the earthquake of 1934. When fate strikes, people change even their homestead; in the same way, the site of the school in Berma too was changed. At that time, there were three kachaharis in Berma. The school began to function in the building of the southern kachahari. Later, that too was shifted, and the school reached the place where it stands now."

Berma is counted among the villages of pandits. People in the surrounding region knew of Gethari Jha, who had received seven hundred bighas of land from the Darbhanga Raj. That land, however, did not fall within the boundary of Berma village; it lay about two kos away. It no longer remains with the family.

In the previous generation, four persons from Berma village became Acharyas in the Vedas, grammar, and literature. Two of them received medals. Of these four, three took up positions in schools outside the village, while one, despite being a medal-winner, opened a small shop selling salt and oil in the village. The saying "one studies Persian and ends up selling oil" came true. Yet, through his dedication and labour, he surpassed the other three in economic terms and exerted a strong influence on society.

Berma was a hardworking village then, and it remains so even today. In other villages, people tease those who are less educated, but this does not happen in Berma. He would bring bundles of goods for the shop on his head from Jhanjharpur market in the fierce sun of Baisakh, and everyone saw this. There was only one shop in the village, and everyone's purchases depended on it. A trader from Jhanjharpur, Shri Jaydev Choudhary, had also come and opened a shop in Berma. His family in Jhanjharpur had been destroyed in the earthquake. Since theirs was a brick house, all were buried under it and died. He then came and settled in Berma.

Just as Berma had awakened politically, it remained advanced in education as well.

English education, too, had by then reached the village, though only to a limited extent. To the north of the village, the Navani school was functioning, and to the south, the Deep school. High schools had also been established at Tamuria and Jhanjharpur. The families of the three pandits who lived outside the village remained in Berma, and the pandits themselves would return and spend all their holidays there.

There is no definite information about when the school was first established in the village, but it is known that its wall collapsed in the earthquake of 1934. After that, the site of the school was changed because people began to regard the earlier place as inauspicious. Yet that site was the Brahm Sthan of the village, a place of sacred power. At present, an anganwadi for young children is being run there.

From that place, the school was shifted to the kachahari of Shri Lakshmikant-Ramakant Sahu. The first election centre of 1952 was also set up in that very kachahari. The school now stands at its third location, on land belonging to Professor Hetukar Jha of Sarisab-Pahi. He is ready to register the land, but it is caught in such a tangle of zamindari records that the deed cannot be executed in his name. The land is known as Budhiya Gachhi. At present, the place has a panchayat building, a school up to the eighth standard, the ruined building of a hospital, and a magnificent Durga Sthan as well.

Though the three villages, Navani, Berma, and Deep, stand along one line, there is a great difference among them in their social atmosphere. One reason is the influence of different parganas; another is their social composition. While Navani and Deep have a large number of palm and date trees, meaning that the number of tari drinkers there is considerable, Berma does not have even a single palm or date tree.

Another difference is that middle-ranking caste groups are in the majority in Berma, whereas in Navani and Deep there are either very wealthy people or very poor people. In Deep especially, the situation is alarming. In a village where there is only one very

rich family, the rest of the people remain poor; this is precisely the condition of Deep village.

When Jagdish Prasad Mandal was five or six years old, he began going to school with his elder brother, Kulkul Mandalji. There was a lower primary school in the village itself, which ran in two shifts. Now, education is available there up to the eighth standard. Similarly, a school that once ran with a single teacher has now reached the strength of seventeen teachers. Does this mean that education in Berma has advanced? For life, all-round development is essential; without it, one remains crippled and incomplete.

Ordinary schools and colleges were indeed established here and there, but technical education did not develop. The result was that the very direction of work changed. Be that as it may, both before and after Independence, Berma remained an advanced village from the political as well as the educational point of view.

In the freedom movement, Bachnu Mishra of the village came to the fore. He worked as a cook in Navani school. He never learned to write, but he became an orator. Bachnu Mishra was so deeply devoted to the country that, during the freedom struggle, he worked day and night for three months, eating only boiled brinjal without salt, while the movement spread from village to village. Honesty, too, comes through work.

After the earthquake of 1934, when relief rations began to be distributed, Bachnu Mishraji of Berma gave such proof of honesty at Madhepur police station that everyone in society began to call him Gandhi ji. There were others with him as well. His contribution to the formation of Berma panchayat was very significant. In terms of population, and according to the panchayat norms of that time, Berma was considered too small. The social fabric was such that each village had its own relationships with others, and therefore the question of who would align with whom became a serious problem. But with the support of the leadership of Deep village, which agreed to divide its own panchayat and help form a new one, Berma panchayat came into being.

Later, Bachnu Mishra's mind became unsettled. He lived for more than eighty years, but his influence diminished. There were

two reasons for the effect on his mind: first, the economic condition of the family, and second, the lack of honesty in the political sphere. Even so, until the very end, he continued to awaken society.

In the first half of the eighteenth century, Pandit Kanchan Jha and Pandit Babue Jha, from a family of the Ekahe Khadka lineage, became Vedic scholars. At that time, English education had not yet spread, but it was certainly a golden age of Sanskrit learning. It was golden in the sense that, barring a few disruptions, the social structure continued to function according to the Vedic system, and this gradually developed further. Later, the influence of English education also became strong.

Pandit Kanchan Jha's son, Pandit Bhutai Jha, became a renowned Vedic scholar, famous as Gethari Jha. He had received seven hundred bighas of land from the Darbhanga Raj as lakheraj brahmottar land. In those days, no one received a place among the pandits unless he had studied in Kashi and returned.

Pandit Chitradhar Thakur belonged to the same family line through a sister's son. He had three sons: Pandit Jaynath Thakur, Pandit Tejnath Thakur, and Pandit Khargnath Thakur. All three were pandits, but the eldest brother took to farming and became a cultivator, while the remaining two brothers, Pandit Tejnath Thakur and Pandit Khargnath Thakur, studied in Kashi and returned. They were counted among scholars of a high order.

Pandit Tejnath Thakur served throughout his life at the Lohna Sanskrit School. After him came Pandit Gaurinath Thakur, Aniruddh Thakur, and Sundar Thakur in the family. Since Pandit Sundar Thakur was physically disabled, he practised as a vaidya in the village itself, that is, in Berma. Pandit Aniruddh Thakur was a scholar of grammar; he served all his life in a school at Sitamarhi.

So far, only two families have been mentioned, but the matter does not end there. There was Pandit Kameshwar Jha, who served not only at the Khagaria school but also at Deep College. He was a profound scholar of the Vedas and grammar. Pandit Chandeshwar Jha became a founding teacher of Araria Middle School and died in middle age.

Pandit Upendra Mishra was different from everyone else. He was a special scholar of astrology, the Vedas, grammar, and

literature. He served in several colleges and then passed away. He was most distinct in the sense that he could not remain in any college for long. Within a year, some dispute or other would inevitably arise. As soon as such a quarrel occurred, he would turn straight towards home and return to Berma.

Yet even after coming to the village, he would say nothing to anyone. No one would even ask him whether he had come casually or after a quarrel. He had an extraordinary quality: he would reflect within himself, see his duty slipping away with time, and then set out for another college. Except for wooden sandals, he never wore shoes or slippers. Among the scholars of the surrounding region, he had his own reputation, and therefore he was welcomed in any school or college.

Pandit Udit Narayan Jha, who had been honoured with a gold medal, left teaching and made shopkeeping his livelihood. The condition of the family was poor. It was not possible to manage without earning. Yet within a short period, his labour bore good fruit. While sustaining his life, he acquired twenty bighas of land for the family.

Pandit Ramnarayan Jha was a scholar of grammar. Being physically strong, he first joined the police service. But as opposition to foreign rule began to rise, he left the job and entered the field of teaching. He served at the Basic School, Ghoghardiha, in the company of Pravasiji.

In 1956, Jagdish Prasad Mandal passed out of the village school. Just east of the village, at Kachhubi, a middle school had been established. Before that, it had been a school only up to the fifth standard. The middle school was opened separately. Now, of course, the two have merged into one, but earlier they were separate institutions. In those days, there was no fee up to the fifth standard. In the sixth and seventh standards, however, a fee of two and a half rupees per month was charged.

In 1960, after completing middle school, Jagdish Prasad Mandal enrolled at Kejriwal High School, Jhanjharpur. The students of Berma were divided each year between Ramauli, that is, Tamuria High School, and Jhanjharpur High School. There was a reason for this. The kind of team of teachers that existed at

Jhanjharpur was not available at Tamuria. In Tamuria High School, one or two teachers would come and go almost every year, whereas this was not so at Jhanjharpur. For this reason, Jhanjharpur was considered the better school.

Just as other students of the village went to Jhanjharpur High School on foot and returned the same way, Jagdish Prasad Mandal too went and came back on foot. Some students also lived in the hostel. Jagdish Prasad Mandalji faced one difficulty or another throughout the year. In fact, some difficulties remain even now. The whole year passed in this manner.

From Aghan to Magh, the days are short, but the school hours were not shortened. When work finds a time suitable to itself, one may not feel the difference between day and night, but for village households this was certainly difficult. In the name of seasonal holidays, there used to be a Christmas vacation of eight or ten days in December, after the examinations and before the results.

Even after the examinations, during the summer months, the difficulties remained, though they were of a different kind. This vacation was also called the mango-eating holiday, but its formal name was summer vacation. It was a long holiday, lasting about a month.

Students from well-off families enjoyed a double advantage because they had a favourable environment. Students from ordinary families, while eating mangoes and passing the days, forgot half, or even more than half, of what they had learned. The educational environment became clearly divided. Just as the cold of winter touches the bamboo screens, so the heat of summer reaches the tips of trees. From April, that is, from Chait, the school would begin early in the morning and continue in that way until the summer vacation began.

There was also this difference between Tamuria High School and Jhanjharpur High School: they opened and closed about half an hour apart. There was a reason for this too. From the villages west of the Kamala, such as Mehath and Naruar, to Berma in the east, and from Gangapur Kharbair to Alpura-Araria, students came to study at Jhanjharpur. Since the area was so large, the school opened a little late. In those days, the school closed at half

past eleven. Naturally, walking five or seven miles at that hour was difficult. Yet it was not impossibly difficult, for students from Berma had gone on foot even to study at Lohna school. The same was true during the rainy season. There was no certainty when rain and storm might arrive, nor how long it would continue to rain. Be that as it may.

At Kejriwal High School, Jhanjharpur, higher secondary classes began in 1963. But there was a slight complication. Teaching was to be provided in all three streams: arts, science, and commerce. Approval was granted for arts and science, but commerce did not receive approval. Many kinds of rumours began to spread. Later, of course, the number of teachers increased, but in the beginning there were difficulties.

In 1959, Janta College was opened. It was established through public cooperation. But the large and spacious building that a college requires could not be built in haste, and so teaching began in an ordinary manner in the high school itself. Instruction began in a few selected subjects. Whatever the limitations, a new awakening in education came to the region. The hopes of many people seemed likely to be fulfilled. If education up to the B.A. level became available nearby, why would students and their guardians not feel enthusiasm? After some time, the college built its own structure of unbaked bricks and tiles.

After passing the Higher Secondary examination in 1965, Jagdish Prasad Mandal enrolled in B.A. Part One. Earlier, the two-year I.A. course and the two-year B.A. Pre course had begun, and students were admitted from both streams. After completing B.A. Part One, he thought of studying Honours. Honours teaching was available in other colleges, but not at Janta College. In no subject were there more than one, two, or three teachers. Even the Hindi department had only two teachers. He therefore began preparing privately. The form was filled in through C.M. College, where the examination was also held.

After the election of 1952, the country had its own duly constituted government. Yet many questions arose all at once and stood before it. Government offices needed employees, and in recruitment, casteism and recommendations began to operate. The

government that had come into being through the awakening of the common people gradually moved away from those very people.

Of course, the situation was much the same as in any newly independent country. But the degree of positive thinking and constructive work that should have been present was not there.

Feudal thinking remained, and feudal forces were strong. As a result, anger began to grow among the common people. The system of governance started functioning like the rule of old kings and feudal chiefs. It was during this period that the Bhoodan movement also emerged. Yet the land movement that had begun from Telangana had already shaken the country. Along with Kerala and Bengal, land movements were gaining ground in scattered ways in several other states as well. In Darbhanga district too, the land movement began.

In the election of 1957, the position of the Congress government weakened. A left government came to power in Kerala. The awakening that had come during the freedom struggle was still fresh; it was not like the present time. During this period, high schools and colleges began to be opened here and there, often privately, but the overall pace remained slow. The khadi cloth industry gradually declined and almost disappeared. Similarly, sugarcane was also a cash crop, but under the influence of industrialists, that too began to die out.

In Mithilanchal, agriculture was essentially the means of livelihood. In a densely agrarian region, agriculture should have been a major source of livelihood, but in reality it was not so. Whatever agriculture existed was entangled in many kinds of deception and manipulation. In sharecropping, half the produce went to the person who cultivated the land. Yet among the crops grown, only a few kinds of grain were profitable. In relation to yield, the cost of cultivation was low in some crops and high in others. Where the cost was high, the sharecropper suffered loss.

Along with this, drought and excessive heat affected even those farmers who cultivated their own fields. Those who owned more land generally had their cultivation done through sharecropping. Since they possessed more grain, the practice of lending grain on interest also operated. The system of grain-lending

varied from village to village. In some villages there was savai, meaning that for one maund borrowed, one and a quarter maunds had to be returned in one season. In some villages there was egarahi, where a maund of eight paseris became eleven paseris. In others there was derhiya, where one maund became twelve paseris. This meant that on one maund, half a maund became interest alone. It also happened that a year's debt had to be repaid within the year; if it was not, the interest was added to the principal, and within two years the debt doubled.

Marriage ceremonies were not as burdensome then as they are now, but at the shraddha of one's parents there was such social and caste pressure that people would sell fields and land in order to perform the rites.

In terms of landholding, there were four or five kinds of farmers. Entire villages belonged to one person or another; and once land was concentrated in one place, what, and how much, could be left for the second and the third?

The condition of the farm labourers who worked in the fields was worse than bad. Their wages for a full day's labour were low, and even that work was available only on a limited number of days in the year.

Among the farmers too, there was a lack of new and scientific methods of cultivation. The reason was that neither did the government pay attention to agriculture, nor were agricultural resources available.

The ploughs used to till the fields were like the plough of King Janaka in the Treta age. As the bullocks were weak and worn out, so were the men who ploughed. Along with this, there was no other arrangement for irrigating the fields. Farming would begin only when there was water. As a result, cultivation took place at the wrong time. Whatever wild fish appeared in ponds and marshy pools was called fish-rearing. The condition of vegetables, greens, fruits, and orchard produce was much the same. Broadly speaking, agriculture had fallen into such a state that it had become difficult to sustain life on it.

In the name of animal husbandry, only the keeping of cows, buffaloes, and goats was in practice. In the rearing of cows and

buffaloes, the system of moneylending was woven in such a way that the person who kept the animals merely kept them. On the one hand, the breeds were backward and the occupation itself remained backward; on the other, it was caught in such a net that it gradually kept declining, leaving no possibility of growth.

As cash crops, sugarcane and jute were cultivated. But because of the dealings of industrialists, both of these too became weak. Naturally, public anger against the government increased. For the people of the villages, the meaning of government benefit extended only as far as quota goods. Even those were looted on the way.

The election of 1967 arrived. Jagdish Prasad Mandal was then a B.A. student. After Independence, this was the first great awakening of the people. Educated people and students, too, entered the field, directly or indirectly.

Jagdish Prasad Mandal completed B.A. Part I, and while he was doing so, the general election of 1967 came. Just as the Congress Party was moving away from the masses and turning into a party of a few particular castes, the condition of other parties too was similar. The Communist Party was strong in some areas, but weak in the Jhanjharpur region. Even so, it was gaining ground there with considerable force.

People's anger against the Congress was growing. An anti-government, or rather anti-Congress-government, atmosphere was taking shape. There were reasons for this. The aspiration that people had carried in their hearts during the freedom movement for an independent country had certainly been present in everyone, but no means had emerged for its fulfilment. At the same time, the Congress Party had left the masses behind and had shrunk into the orbit of particular families or particular castes.

In rural society, no clear benefit of independence had appeared before the people. The condition of agrarian Mithilanchal remained much as it had been before Independence. In the country as a whole, the condition of farmers in Punjab did improve because the government there gave agriculture priority and arranged for water and electricity. Water and electricity are the principal requirements of agriculture. This did not happen in Bihar, that is,

in Mithilanchal. The system of education, too, did not become what it should have become.

Alongside all this, there were many other reasons because of which resentment grew among students too. With the growth of political consciousness, the number of those who awakened society also increased. Yet the condition of all the opposition parties was poor because of their mutual quarrels. With the rise of a new consciousness, all the anti-Congress political parties came onto one platform. Just as people had risen against British rule, they now rose against Congress rule. This may be said of the whole country, but of Bihar it can certainly be said that after Independence this was the first great awakening of the people.

Bringing all parties onto one platform did not make it possible to frame any definite programme, for what could really be achieved in such haste? The general election was already close at hand; therefore, the programme that emerged was simply to change the government.

Along with farmers and farm labourers, intellectuals too entered the field. The anti-Congress atmosphere was firmly formed.

In our Madhubani district today there are two parliamentary constituencies, but in those days it was still Darbhanga district. In both constituencies, the Congress was defeated. It was not merely defeated; its vote percentage fell very low. Since the one-point programme was to remove the Congress, no state could form a government of a single party. Khichri governments, mixed and unstable coalitions, were formed in Bihar, Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, and several other states.

The states were already burdened with problems; the central question was from which end those problems should be grasped. In the meantime, the wide-spreading and full-grown Bhoodan movement too began to scatter. Yet a few people did come to the political platform through Bhoodan. Bhoodan had been raised as a movement.

The land movement in Telangana, however, was then at its peak. A campaign began demanding one-sixth of land as donation. People donated lakhs upon lakhs of bighas. Everyone expected that

one-sixth of the country's land would reach the poor. In any village, from two per cent to fifteen or twenty per cent of land is used for homesteads. In that situation, one-sixth comes to more than sixteen per cent, and thus both the income and expenditure of land were accounted for. Even today, in 2012, there are many families who do not have even four decimals of land on which they can build a house.

The Bhoodan movement came and went like something blown about in the air. It did not have as much effect as the disappearance of even a single cottage industry from the village. Trade had been carried on through the khadi bhandar, but such decay entered it that grain and soil became mixed together. When the grain and the soil left by rats look alike, how is one to separate them?

Of course, even today a few people have received Bhoodan land and built prosperous lives. Similarly, the cloth trade, that is, the khadi trade, still continues, but only in a negligible form. Just as people say, "in loot, even the spinning wheel makes a profit," the profit of the spinning wheel too was shrinking. Even now, no one wishes to enter the crowd of fundamental problems. Such a society has not been formed. And how can such a society be formed, when those who break things are more numerous than those who set them right?

The number of unemployed people is not small. Yet there are also such unemployed people who, with a motorcycle, hotel visits, mobile phone, clothes, food, and all other expenses, have built for themselves a life costing twenty thousand rupees a month.

A coalition government was formed with a thirty-three-point programme. In the matriculation examination, the importance of the English language was reduced. At the same time, voices were raised for making education free up to high school.

After 1957, English education moved forward. The English that had earlier begun from the eighth standard, that is, from high school, now entered the middle school. It began from the sixth standard. Somehow, with much pulling and dragging, the government lasted eighteen months. Then came a mid-term election. But the earlier khichri government, which had no proper

share of ghee in it, became this time a ghee-laden khichri government. It did not do much towards solving problems, but it certainly created public awakening.

Meanwhile, the Green Revolution also came into agriculture. In some places, fields that had earlier yielded five seers per katha began to yield a quintal per katha. But the misfortune of our land was also this: those who owned the fields went away to cities and even abroad in search of employment, while the fields remained in the village. The practice of sharecropping was such that the sharecropper gained nothing. After earning a little money, people's habits and social customs became sharper too. Does a person sell land because of poverty, or will he sell it even when he has some money? That question remains. But how could one sell land and cut the nose of one's forefathers?

Along with this, government offices became centres of paper-bound confusion. Each and every problem of Mithilanchal belongs to the people of Mithila themselves. Even now, children are beaten in schools in such a manner that they leave school altogether. If behaviour from the eighteenth century continues in the twenty-first century, no proper benefit can be expected from it.

In the electoral rush of 1967, Jagdish Prasad Mandal became a member of the Communist Party of India in January 1967. The election was already close at hand, and the Congress Party lost from Madhepur.

From village society to national politics, a state of disorder began to emerge. The prestige of the government, that is, the Congress government, had fallen when the left government of Kerala was dismissed in 1957. The number of freedom fighters had not yet diminished very much, though some sharp and powerful leaders had certainly died.

In the political field, nepotism, casteism, communalism, defection, and similar tendencies gained strength. The credibility of leadership also declined. While the people's credibility fell in the eyes of leaders because of casteism, members of the Legislative Assembly and Parliament from various parties began to appear among the people dressed in kurta and dhoti. Along with the big leaders, smaller leaders too began to be sacrificed, for caste,

kinship, village ties, neighbourhood relations, and even transactions became the basis of politics.

Bihar's politics too began to sway and twist like the dance of Jata-Jatin. The administration also took advantage of this. Parties without votes began, by pressing down the parties with votes, to seize power. The village panchayat, to begin with, existed merely like a name on a cinema poster. Strengthening it was the most important task, but this was one such institution of the country that was made still weaker and gathered into the hands of the government machinery.

The dominance of courts and litigation arrived; how could it not? On one side, defeated mukhiyas and others began to come into power, while on the other, the true representatives of the people remained on the road. The zamindars and feudal elements were rubbed away little by little; their land in village after village became a common arena for villagers. The situation became one of "whoever has the stick owns the buffalo."

Amid ideological currents, political parties too began to face upheaval. Broadly speaking, on every social, economic, intellectual, and political platform, along with ideological conflict, socio-economic analysis also began. Its result became clear during Indiraji's period of leadership. After Independence, this was the first ideological struggle within the Congress.

In village after village, priestly authority too received a blow. The old saying that caste does not move ahead without the ritual letter became decisive. Yet the form of economic exploitation did not diminish. Some change in ideas certainly came, but the practical side remained where it had been.

However much things remained unchanged, some benefit did come from opposition to the system. There was a reason too: the work began amid clamour, but the language of books and scriptures was still Sanskrit. Those who could read were few, and those who could understand were, naturally, fewer still. Even so, some friction and disturbance continued here and there. In one place people quarrelled over "Om"; elsewhere, over something else.

Just as the condition of books and scriptures became

confused, so did the condition of Gandhism on the political platform. The statement was one, the explanation a single line, yet from each mouth it began to take a different colour. There is a need to resolve this problem firmly; otherwise, there will remain no difference between the feast of mundan and the feast of shraddha.

Educational institutions became yet another centre for such activities. There was no restraint of any kind. The same people would teach Gandhian principles in college, come out into the field and mock them, and then sell themselves in the Assembly and Parliament. Such a game went on openly.

Yet one thing certainly happened: just as the year 1942 created an anti-British atmosphere, the atmosphere of 1967 too created its own current. On one side stood farmers struck by drought; on another, the conflict between feudal powers and capitalists. Between caste and caste, and between class and caste, distances were drawn like a ploughed field divided into squares and gathered into one block, though it never became complete in every sense.

Of course, the Kosi bridge and embankment were built, including the Nepal gate, and work also began on the Kosi canal; but what benefit came of it is something we can see for ourselves.

The kind of agitation that took place in colleges and institutions of higher education did not occur in high schools. As for middle schools, there was hardly any question of it. The highest office of the university, that of the Vice-Chancellor, which had once belonged within the circle of scholars, began to pass into the hands of administrative officers. How could it not? After all, there is a practical difference between scholarship and administration.

No effective rule could really be enforced. Some colleges were government institutions, while others were non-government. Some had just been established, while others were still only in imagination. In such a situation, how could rules acquire firmness?

The current from above flowed downwards. Students who had spent the whole year in politics had to pass examinations somehow. For that too, a kind of law was needed. A wave arose, and leaving aside one or two colleges, cheating began in examinations. Even those who examined answer-books found

Agahan coming into their hands. Many sacred threads were broken among teachers. Once money came into people's hands, they also began moving towards towns.

Be that as it may, some students from weaker sections certainly benefited. Yet things did not happen to the extent they should have. Various kinds of private colleges rose and stood merely on paper. Teaching on paper, examinations on paper, and paper degrees began to be sold. Because of this, the fundamental problems were left aside. Neither did medical colleges increase, nor engineering colleges; neither engineers nor factories came into being; neither technical colleges grew, nor skilled artisans were produced. Neither did agricultural colleges increase, nor did skilled farmers emerge.

Through the relationship between North and South Bihar, educated people from this region, that is, from Mithilanchal, found employment in South Bihar. Many even built houses and courtyards there. But when the two states were divided, language became bounded. In any case, the language of South Bihar does not have the same uniformity as the language of Mithilanchal. There was a reason for this too: when there were no factories or industries here, what jobs would people from other states come to seek? Therefore, the language suffered no blow.

Jagdish Prasad Mandal passed his B.A. with Honours in Hindi and enrolled at C.M. College in the 1969–71 batch. The standard of education had already declined. The relationship between professors and students had suffered a severe blow, and the prestige of teachers began to diminish. Good teachers kept their mouths shut and became engaged in protecting their dignity. Resentment among teachers too continued to grow. Transactions of money and the influence of recommendation increased greatly. On one side, caste-based relations between students and teachers increased; on the other, relations with those of other castes weakened.

The examinations of all classes were delayed, but the M.A. examination was delayed by three years. After completing his classes, Jagdish Prasad Mandalji returned to the village and began waiting for the examination. Meanwhile, the idea of organising

Durga Puja arose in Berma village. Discussions began everywhere. Most people were in favour of the puja. But Durga Puja is not like other forms of worship that can be performed in a small space. It requires a large area because it involves ten days of worship, along with shops, fairs, dance, and entertainment.

Agreement had already formed among the villagers, and a meeting was held in the school premises. Meetings of the villagers had been held many times before, but never had so many people attended as were present in this meeting. Similarly, the number of speakers in the meeting also increased. The new generation took the responsibility upon its shoulders.

In the meeting, the selection of the site for the puja began. Two or three places were found where Durga Puja could be properly accommodated. But an empty space alone would not be enough. Since there would be a fair throughout the day and night, safety was also necessary. For this reason, the importance of a secure place increased. Consensus was reached on the school premises.

The second question that arose concerned the offering of sacrifice. In the region around Berma village, Durga Puja was performed in both ways. There was also the Vaishnav form of Durga Puja, in which no sacrifice was offered. In other words, at some places sacrifice was made, and at some places it was not.

The matter became entangled. In a village that had begun with one opinion, two opinions emerged. The meeting, which had started with unanimity, became divided into two views. Those opposed to sacrifice became more numerous than those in its favour. On the other hand, the time of the Puja was drawing near. If it slipped away that year, the whole year would be lost; this too was in everyone's mind.

After much churning and argument, the offering of sacrifice was stopped. But the dispute only grew. The reason was that the panchayat mukhiya of the time had considerable influence. Yet a new consciousness had also awakened in society. When the panchayat had first been formed in 1952, the man who became mukhiya had lost the election of 1962; that difference too remained alive.

Ten or twelve days before the Puja, a serious incident took place in the village. The existing mukhiya, after consulting a few selected people, laid the foundation for the Puja at another site, that is, at a place other than the school premises.

Anger spread through society. But no one had the courage to move forward. There was enthusiasm in people's minds, but there was fear too. The reason was clear: the influential people of the area had extended their support to that very site.

Jagdish Prasad Mandalji and a few others thought of holding a second meeting. No one opposed them directly, but no one was ready to come forward openly either. A grave problem rose before them. Everyone understood that, just as after disputes in a marriage a compromise is eventually reached, so too, if this year's opportunity was lost, the Puja would still somehow take place elsewhere. Therefore, if the chance slipped from their hands, the Puja itself would slip away. A meeting was held among a few people.

In that meeting, it was decided that a second Puja should also be organised. And so it happened. Along with this, it was also decided that no one would go outside the village to collect donations; whatever money came from within society would be used to conduct the Puja. If there was no betel leaf, the stalk of the betel leaf itself would serve the purpose.

On the other side, however, where the mukhiya stood, donations poured in. Money came from official sources as well as from other panchayats. At the same time, a compulsory village contribution was also imposed. Donation should depend upon the will of the giver, not upon force, yet that too happened. In the name of donation, it took the form of a fine, not openly, but quietly. The circumstances too favoured such a method. Where would a person already caught in quarrels and disputes go?

But in village society, nothing ever remains hidden. Society was divided into three parties: two parties belonging to the two Durga Sthans, and a third party of those who stood on both sides. Those who stood on both sides were trapped in the compulsory contribution.

The Puja began. There were some clear differences between

the two sites. One of them was that Jagdish Prasad Mandal and the others turned villagers themselves into new shopkeepers. Someone opened a sweet shop; someone else opened another kind of stall. Since the Puja was being organised with the donations of society, and since the people of society themselves would run the shops, the system of batti, or fair tax, was abolished.

A few persons stood up boldly and declared that they too would organise the Puja in the same way as the other side was doing. Even if the donations did not suffice, they would contribute personally. There were about five to seven such persons. It was also decided that they would not go to the other site.

Once again, the people of the middle path were trapped. They were not merely trapped; whichever side they went to, people mocked and spat upon them. If they came this way, those from the other side muttered against them; if they went that way, those from this side whispered into their ears. The thinking of the older generation received a blow. Society came into the hands of the younger generation. Along with this, the neighbouring villages of Berma, Jagdar, and Kachhubi were also divided, so both sites received support from both villages.

When the coalition government was formed, the high schools too were affected, because some schools came under government control. Those that came under control saw their condition improve, and the salaries of their teachers also increased. But those that did not come under government control remained where they were. Thus, a new struggle began in the field of education as well. ❑

AFTER 1960: THE FORMATIVE YEARS

☰

After 1960, Jagdish Prasad Mandal enrolled at Kejriwal High School. Because of the difficulty of going to and returning from school, the family began to think of buying a bicycle. When he was in the tenth class, the Special Ninth, a Sabro bicycle was bought for him for two hundred and sixty-two rupees.

But just as a soldier posted on the border feels when caught by an enemy soldier, so the soldiers of hardship surrounded the family from all sides. Both his paternal cousins, the elder Gonor Mandal and the younger Kari Mandal, began to remember the ancestral homestead of their forefathers. The mouth of the Kosi current, which had earlier pressed towards the west, now began to press towards the east. As a result, portions of land in the region of villages such as Harinahi, Mainahi, Amhi, and Hardi began to re-emerge.

People whose villages had been scattered and uprooted, and who had kept their ears alert in the hope of recovering the submerged property of their fathers and grandfathers, now thought of visiting their old villages. In this very sequence, Jagdish Prasad Mandalji's paternal cousin decided to go from Berma to Harinahi and see his own village.

In a well-settled village, a somewhat selfish tendency naturally arises in people: that everything in the entire village should belong only to them. The tendency is not wrong in itself, provided one is prepared to carry not only the burden of property

but also the burden of human beings. The people of Harinahi had been scattered here and there; in some places, five or seven families lived together. Through their kinship networks, they had spread as far as Nepal.

The most painful condition of the village came when women from respectable families, women who had never stepped outside the work of their own homes and courtyards, were forced to become farm labourers and sell their labour in others' fields for a single paseri of raw grain, even though their homes had once had large granaries and storehouses.

But what could be done? It is true that if the hand does not find the tools demanded by time, it is bound to fall behind. Like ripe jamun fruits dropping one after another, their lives slipped away. Everything in life began to disappear. In fact, it did disappear. How much hope could displaced people have of government help in another land, in another village? That is plain before everyone. Even today, such poor people in the village do not receive Indira Awas because they do not possess land documents in their own names.

It was Kartik in 1960. To see his village, his paternal cousin Gonor Mandal went to Harinahi. When he got down from the train at Ghoghardiha and made enquiries, he learned that he would first have to go to Hatni, from Hatni to Nauwa-Bakhair, from Nauwa-Bakhair to Amhi, and only after that to Harinahi. How far could it be? Perhaps two kos. Thinking it to be only two kos, enthusiasm rose in his mind: at most, it would take two hours.

But he could not understand that between Ghoghardiha and Hatni alone, three streams had to be crossed. And village transport, after all, does not move according to the wish of a single traveller. It took him four hours to reach Hatni. On the boundary between Hatni and Nauwa-Bakhair there was yet another large stream.

Gonor Mandal reached Harinahi after sunset. One of his agnatic kinsmen had already arrived there and, becoming the owner of about one and a half bighas of land, had begun to receive produce from the cultivated fields and look towards the needs of his family. As soon as Gonor Mandal reached Harinahi, he became the guest of his agnatic brother Chulhai Mandal. Seeing the difficult route he

had travelled, Chulhai Mandal urged him to stay for two days.

The earlier homestead land of Gonor Mandal's village had sunk low, while the embankment had risen high. Now it lay near the boundary of Supaul district. The house fell within Harinahi village of Madhubani district, while the entire frontage lay in Hardi village of Supaul district, the place to which Hemlataji belongs, who has been an MLA from Phulparas.

Around fifteen families had come and settled in the village. Of these, two families had already brought bullocks to their cattle-posts; the rest lived by the spade. Seeing his resurfaced homestead and pond, Gonor Mandal felt drawn to the place. It was not yet fit for habitation, but seeing that the land was fit for cultivation, he said to Chulhai Mandal:

"Brother, I shall be here on the eighth day from now."

On the fourth day, he returned to Berma and said to his aunt:

"Aunt, I shall go to my own village, Harinahi."

His aunt asked:

"How will you go?"

Gonor replied:

"We have bamboo here. I shall take one bamboo with me and first build a hut. After that, we shall see."

Just as a brahmachari, stepping out of the brahmashram and looking towards the world, begins to see a many-coloured world, so too did Gonor Mandal begin to see one. How could he not? The lost village and home of earlier days, the agnatic kin, the wider community, all that had become history, now began to appear before his eyes.

His maternal uncle, Jagdish Prasad Mandalji's father, had in fact purchased for him one bigha of paddy land and two and a half kathas of homestead land. Yet both brothers, Gonor Mandal and Kari Mandal, had forgotten Harinahi. How could they not forget it? When documents and khatiyan papers of lost land are in hand, hope remains alive. But where even those documents and records do not exist, who can say where the land lies submerged like a stone in water? If there is a helbaiya, someone who understands the hidden turns of water, he may make a guess; but an ignorant man remains

ignorant.

On the seventh day, Gonor Mandal cut a bamboo, trimmed and prepared it, and made up his mind that the next day he would go to the village. He would go from Berma to Harinahi. He would stay there four days, first build some shelter fit for living, and then see what was to be done next.

Gonor Mandal said to his aunt:

"Aunt, I shall stay there for four days and first build a hut fit to live in. On the fifth day I shall return here."

His aunt, Jagdish Prasad Mandalji's mother, said:

"Very well, my son. Will one arhaiya of rice and one arhaiya of beaten rice be enough for you?"

Gonor Mandal fell into uncertainty. The more food he arranged to carry, the heavier it would become on the road, and that burden would fall upon both body and bundle. The route itself was seven or eight kos, full of streams and low channels. On top of that, there would be the bamboo and the food. It would become very heavy.

In the village, that is, in Berma, he ate a full morning meal and tied up something for the road. It would not do to leave behind his lota, plate, clothes, and other belongings either. In the end, he took a small plate, a lota, two sacks for bedding, one arhaiya of beaten rice, and one arhaiya of rice, and set out the next day.

Never in his life had he undertaken such heavy labour. It is true that he had cut bamboo from the bamboo grove and brought it, and had carried bundles of paddy from the fields, just as he had carried ploughs and double-seat ploughing stools to and from the fields. But this was the first time he had encountered such a heavy task.

Leaving Berma and passing through Kachhubi and Tamuria, he went on towards Sundar-Birajit and became exhausted. When he looked back, he had crossed only two kos; when he looked ahead, there still remained Pauni-Chapram, Kalikapur, and Matras, and all these lay outside the Kosi embankment. Only at Matras would he cross the Kosi embankment and enter within. Even after crossing Matras, he would still have to go two kos further inside.

After a short while, Gonor Mandal felt bewildered. On the road of life, he felt lost like a child. But after resting a little, he gathered himself again. He drank water, lifted the bamboo, and set out once more. By the time he reached the Matras embankment, feverish heat and chills had entered his body.

Who would meet him in such a place? There was no one he knew. In a village home, when parents are present, even a child's crust of straw is called a sweet lump; but when they are absent, even the sweet lump becomes mere straw.

Even then, there were more than twenty-five kinship connections of Berma in Matras, and they remain there even now. Seeing the bamboo placed on the Kosi embankment and seeing Gonor Mandal lying there, one man came near. He was on his way from the embankment towards the village. Coming close, he asked:

"Where are you from?"

Trembling with fever and chills, Gonor Mandal replied:

"Berma."

"Where do you have to go?"

"Harinahi."

"How will you go in this condition?"

"That is exactly what I cannot think out."

"Do one thing. I am not a stranger either. My sister too lives in your village. We are kin."

The moment he heard the word kin, it was as though Gonor Mandal suddenly recovered his senses from somewhere. He said:

"Kutum Narayan! If somehow I can return to my village, Berma, my life will be saved. Otherwise I shall not survive."

"Can you go to Ghoghardiha from here?"

"I can go if I go empty-handed."

"Leave all your belongings at my place and you go. This, just east of the embankment, is my house."

Finding hope, Gonor said:

"I have some beaten rice with me too. Come, I shall eat a little, leave the things with you, and then go."

With fresh courage, he set off towards Ghoghardiha station. But on the way, his condition became such that he could neither see the road clearly nor move himself forward. At that time, the train from Nirmali used to arrive at four o'clock. By good fortune, he caught the train. By seven in the evening, he had returned to Berma.

Already exhausted from the whole day's journey and then stricken with fever, as soon as he reached the village, he burst into loud weeping, just as sons and daughters weep before their parents.

Seeing the condition of the nephew she had raised and cared for, his aunt, Jagdish Prasad Mandalji's mother, began to cry so loudly that it seemed her nephew would not survive. By then, both brothers had been married, and their gauna too had taken place. Both sisters-in-law were also in Berma.

And then, as happens at dusk when one jackal comes out of a thicket and cries "pu," and jackals begin howling from here and there, not only that, but the jackals of the neighbouring areas too gather and howl in one collective voice. Why would they not howl? The creature that hides in the bushes all day in fear finds its companion only in darkness.

Just as thieves are of both kinds, those of the day and those of the night, and just as jackals too find their time to roam, so, when the aunt began to cry, both sisters-in-law also began wailing loudly. Hearing the lamentation, people from one or two neighbourhoods began to come rushing in. Without even seeing Gonor Mandal, some began rubbing their eyes and sobbing; some said this, some said that.

Bhadba had passed five days earlier, but one old woman came to know of Bhadba only on its last day. She counted from that very day and said that today was the sixth day of Bhadba. She said:

"How could he take his first step in Bhadba? If one knowingly goes to be cooked in fire, will one not burn?"

Where all the weepers gather, who will keep silent? Be that as it may.

After about a month, Gonor Mandal became fit for work and effort again. The Aghan harvest had passed. Besides, in 1958 too

there had been a major flood. People say that flood causes destruction, but it also causes fertility; yet this depends upon the structure of the land from village to village. In some villages, there are many low-lying fields, and if two heavy rains fall in the very beginning, they hold water. There are also high villages, sandy villages, where water remains only as long as the rain falls; once the rain stops, the water too disappears. The village remains as dry as before. For such villages, flood is like a plaything. Therefore, if someone cuts a spill-channel or embankment and plays such a game, what harm is there, provided such a game is not played?

The family was surrounded like a soldier trapped in the hands of enemy soldiers. To begin with, the flood of 1958 had already sunk the family into hardship. How could it not? A single flood or a single drought strikes an agriculture-based family for five years.

At the very beginning of Phagun, both paternal cousins of Jagdish Prasad Mandalji went to Harinahi with bamboo, provisions, and money for expenses. On bamboo posts, they raised a makeshift hut of manjar and straw, and thatched it with kans grass. As soon as they had a place to stay, they began clearing the land near their pond and digging and shaping it.

Harinahi was a wilderness of khattha, pater, and jhaua growth. Just as the people of Vietnam made every inch of land, destroyed by bombs and gunpowder, fit for cultivation again, the people of Harinahi began clearing the forest growth of their village. The wilderness was such that anyone who cleared even ten dhurs of land would consider himself hardworking.

The two brothers, Gonor Mandal and Kari Mandal, worked together to break the wilderness and, from time to time, came back to Berma to take money for expenses. After six months, the first produce came into their hands. Like a cow yielding milk after calving, jali paddy, maize, kaun, and other crops came together. The work of the family increased. They also bought a bullock for cultivation and took it there. A basic outline of the family's life began to take shape.

By then, twenty families had settled in Harinahi village. Three hand-pumps had also been installed, so there was now

provision for water. A hand-pump could be set up with twenty feet of pipe and a six-foot filter. Cash-crop cultivation began with jute. Harinahi village became a cultivable stretch of thirty to thirty-five bighas of land.

In 1962, Kari Mandal, the younger paternal cousin of Jagdish Prasad Mandalji, fell ill. He was seriously ill. There was no facility for treatment in Harinahi. At that time, a man from Jhagdaua village in Darbhanga district used to practise medicine in Berma. He was a Muslim. Jagdish Prasad Mandal's maternal village was Mansara. Mansara and Jhagdaua are neighbouring villages. Because of this, a maternal-uncle-and-nephew relationship had developed between them and that doctor sahib. Although he lived in the Muslim quarter, because of the maternal-village connection he spent most of his time there. Jagdish Prasad Mandal's mother said to him:

"Brother, my nephew is in great distress."

He agreed to go.

At that time, there were two vaidyas in Berma. The first was Sundar Thakur and the second was Niras Mahato. Sundar Thakur was a pandit, an acharya. But he was physically disabled, and his speech stammered a little. Yet he had seen life from so close that he had withdrawn somewhat from the family and established an ashram of his own. It was called an aushadhalaya, a dispensary.

Since he came from a family with fields and land, he had built the dispensary in a spacious manner. In its courtyard, he had planted hundreds of varieties of medicinal herbs. Sundar Thakur lived a disciplined life. Of course, that discipline was sometimes broken. The reason for this was his practice as a vaidya, as a healer. Healing is a profession that sits beside the last ghat of life; one never knows when a traveller for which ghat will arrive.

Even so, Vaidyaji had a certain firmness towards his duties. His firmness was this: when he began his worship, no one could interrupt him. For that purpose, he kept someone to guard the place. Yet a question continued to trouble his mind: if, while I am engaged in worship, the very deity for whom I worship comes before me, what shall I do?

A few days later, therefore, he changed his routine. Just as,

in the twenty-four-hour carriage of life, people make their own routine according to their work, he too stopped worshipping during the day and began to worship at night. This proved beneficial for everyone. He lived a long life. Every eighth day, he would ride a horse and visit vaidyas in other villages, and they too would come to him. In this way, from intellectual relations to practical ones, from the planting of medicinal herbs to the methods of preparing medicines, his bonds remained strong.

The second vaidya was Niras Mahato. Unlike Pandit Sundar Thakur, Niras Mahato was not formally educated. But the making of human beings is strange. Some study in colleges and become doctors or engineers; others become such people by moving about within the village and the household world. In the same way, there are many who read the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, and who recite them in song, though they cannot even write their own name and village.

Be that as it may. Niras Mahato was a vaidya born of the soil. The treatment of both men was practised in the village. But allopathic medicine too had by then entered the village, and so Tunibabu and Buchkun Babu from the villages near Berma also began to come and go.

The doctor from Jhagdaua stayed in Berma for nearly fifteen years. Jagdish Prasad Mandal's mother called him bhaiya, brother, and he too addressed her as sister. People of the Muslim quarter called him Doctor Sahib, while some people of other neighbourhoods also called him Maulvi Sahib. He was, in fact, a man of prayer. Some people called him "Maulvi Sahib Doctor," and in this way his real name itself was lost.

Jagdish Prasad Mandal's elder brother, Kulkul Mandal, his mother, and his maternal uncle, the doctor, all three caught the train at Tamuria and went with enthusiasm as far as the Ghoghardiha embankment of the Kosi. But when they looked from the embankment, both his mother and elder brother were frightened. They did not have the courage to move a step forward. Close beside the embankment was a large stream, whose water was flowing with considerable speed.

The maternal uncle understood their fear and, giving them

courage, said:

"Sister, what kind of stream is this! I have rowed boats and even swum in streams much larger than this. What a fine boat there is. Just as others will cross, so shall we."

Meanwhile, they met a man from Harinahi village itself. Through questions and enquiries on the embankment, they were able to understand the route. In towns and markets, it is not good to ask questions without reason; but in an area of streams, forests, or deserts, such questioning is useful, for one may find a companion.

All three reached Harinahi. As soon as people heard the doctor's name, families from other houses also gathered. Immediately upon arrival, he began injections and medicines. Kari Mandal's treatment started.

Doctor Sahib was very fond of tea. In fact, tea was almost an addiction for him. In the village, there was no question of a tea shop; there was not even a shop selling tea leaves and sugar. When he left Berma, and even when he got down from the train at Ghoghardiha, he did not remember this. And how would he have remembered? Without having seen the place, why would his attention go towards what it was like and what it lacked?

Somehow, he managed the first day, but on the second day he began to suffer. Without tea, his mind felt broken. On this side, the mother and elder brother too began to feel: where have we come?

With the first day's treatment, Kari Mandal showed some improvement. On one side, the maternal uncle, Doctor Sahib, remained under the pull of tea; on the other, he felt happiness rising in his heart at the effect of the treatment.

By then, about ten buffaloes and cows had come into the village. Harinahi and Hardi villages are situated near the border of Saharsa district, now Supaul, and Madhubani district. Between them lay a stream called Marna Dhar, which had uprooted both Harinahi and Hardi. Gonor Mandalji's house stood at the westernmost end of the village. For, just as a market moves forward facing the front, so does a new village move.

The village ran east to west; in that sense, it was a Surya Mandal village. From the point of view of habitation, this earlier arrangement was not good, because in terms of fire, shade, and storms, there would be greater exposure. Along the bank of the stream, as it extended westward, so too it extended eastward. Gonor Mandal told his agnatic brother Chulhai Mandal that all the agnates would build their houses close together. Since Chulhai's house stood on the western side, Gonor's house too was built towards the west. At that time, Gonor Mandal's house was the westernmost house in the village, though now the village has spread much farther west beyond it.

At about three in the afternoon, the buffaloes of Harinahi and the buffaloes of the western hamlet of Hardi village, the hamlet to which Hemlataji belongs, who has been an MLA from Phulparas, were grazing in the bed and on the edge of the stream. Between them there was a channel. Harinahi was a village of twenty or twenty-five houses, while Hardi was divided into three hamlets, settled at some distance from one another.

The buffaloes of both villages were grazing in the stream-bed and along its edge. For some reason or other, a quarrel broke out among the herdsmen. The two villages were close to each other. A noisy confrontation began. A fierce fight followed with sticks and lathis. Many heads were split, and hands and feet were broken. The two hamlets belonged to two castes, and there was a great clash between them.

Although Harinahi had fewer houses, some families there had settled after coming from the Singheshwar Sthan side, and among them were three seasoned fighters; therefore, the people of Hardi suffered more in the fight. Yet no criminal case was filed. There was a reason for this too: on this side, the Phulparas police station had to cross four streams to arrive, while on that side, towards Supaul, one had to cross several branches and cuts of the Kosi.

The fight took place about five bighas west of Gonor Mandal's house. The men had gone to fight, but the women and children watched the spectacle. The three people from Berma too, Doctor Sahib, Jagdish Prasad Mandalji's mother, and his elder

brother, saw the fight. Seeing it, all three became frightened. Each had his own reason for fear. Doctor Sahib knew the ways of police stations and courts, and therefore he was afraid. He could guess that as soon as the police arrived, those who had fought would leave the village. But what about us?

Similarly, Jagdish Prasad Mandal's mother and his elder brother, Kulkul Mandal, had also seen the police raids in Berma in 1956-57. In the evening, everyone decided that early the next morning they would leave the place, taking the patient, Kari Mandal, back to the village, Berma. And that is what they did.

At home in Berma, there used to be three buffaloes and two bullocks at the cattle-post. With the number of family members reduced, the three buffaloes became one. Without bullocks, however, nothing could be managed.

Four or five years earlier, in 1956-57, Kulkul Mandal had left middle school and enrolled in amanat, that is, training in land measurement, a six-month course. A teacher from Muzaffarpur, an amin, had come and opened a school in the village. At first, ten persons enrolled in it, but after a few days six of them left. Four persons studied till the end and became amins.

Until then, Jagdish Prasad Mandal had not properly taken charge of the buffaloes, though he would sometimes go with his brothers to graze them. But with the reduction in family members, the burden fell heavily upon him. The family had some income. But when the family of the paternal cousin left Berma for Harinahi, the household in Berma suddenly became smaller. With that, the household work too was reduced.

Until then, Jagdish Prasad Mandalji's mother had never gone out of the house to the fields, but now she too began to go. The land that had been given to Jagdish Prasad Mandal's paternal cousin, Gonor Mandal, was sold, and he took the proceeds with him. As a result, the landholding decreased, and the yield decreased as well. Yet even in the fourth generation, the same relationship with that family continues as before. Even today, Sanjay, who lives with Umesh Mandalji, the son, at Nirmali, is the grandson of that paternal cousin.

Jagdish Prasad Mandal was still in high school when his

duragaman took place. His marriage had already been performed earlier. With the departure of the paternal cousin, it was not only the family that became smaller; the household business and work also declined. Internal disputes too began to arise within the family. At the root of these disputes was Jagdish Prasad Mandal's education.

There were two sources of this: first, Kulkul Mandal, and second, those in society who were interested, or appeared to be interested, in the family's welfare. Openly, there was no dispute in the family, but Kulkul Mandal's activities began to change. Leaving aside the work of the household, he became absorbed throughout the day in dance performances. A dance party was also run at his in-laws' place.

The election of 1967 arrived. Jagdish Prasad Mandalji had also become a member of the Communist Party. During the election, there was widespread rigging at booths throughout the district. Just as there was heavy rigging, there were also fights and assaults from village to village, and cases and lawsuits increased greatly. Along with this, movement to and from jail also increased.

With the rise in cases and lawsuits, the work of courts and legal offices increased. At that time, the state of Bihar had only seventeen districts. The possibility of increasing their number grew. The possibility of increasing subdivisions, blocks, and similar administrative units also grew.

In the election of 1967, in what is now Madhubani district, though at that time it was only a subdivision, Bhogendraji, Bhogendra Jha, became the Communist Party's Member of Parliament. Of the two parliamentary seats, one went to the Communist Party and the other to the Socialist Party, to Shivchandra Jha. In the district, just as the Congress lost in Parliament, it also lost in the Legislative Assembly. The Communist Party won four MLA seats and one MP seat.

The state government changed, but the government of the country, that is, in Delhi, did not change. The number of opposition members increased. In every state where the Congress government fell, opposition governments were formed. But nowhere was there a single-party majority. Coalition governments came into being. A

group had broken away from the Congress Party and formed the Jan Kranti Dal in Bihar. It was led by Mahamaya Babu, who became Chief Minister.

Today, corruption has become the main problem. But even at that time, petty thieving and corruption were widespread. Whichever department one looked at, it was afflicted by corruption. Mahamaya Babu's government set up an inquiry commission against the former Congress ministers, under the leadership of a judge of the Supreme Court. It came to be known as the Ayyar Commission.

Vaidyanath Ram "Ayyar" was a judge of the Supreme Court. He belonged to the South. He was about ninety-five or ninety-six years old, and still alive. He submitted his inquiry report against six ministers of the former Bihar government. He had proved the embezzlement of crores of rupees.

In 1966, Bihar came under the grip of drought. Since it was the first year, its severity was not felt so much. Had it been fully understood, it would have become an issue in the 1967 election; but that did not happen. After the new government was formed, however, in the second year its impact became very clear. Starvation began. A formidable question rose before the government.

It was decided that a campaign should be launched against hoarders. But such a drama took shape that the campaign turned into a mockery. The drama was this: ten or twenty such persons were caught whose grain trade ran on the backs of horses. But that was not the whole truth. A few such hoarders were also caught whose godowns contained lakhs of quintals of grain.

After taking oath in Parliament, when Bhogendraji visited Madhubani, he held his first public meeting at Sakri. Since he was a newly elected member, and also because he belonged to their own party, about fifteen to twenty people from Berma village went to attend the meeting. There was, in any case, the facility of the train. Besides, the people of the red flag used to go even as far as Delhi for demonstrations.

One quality of Bhogendraji's speeches was that he would say in advance:

"Whoever has any question to ask, ask it."

Answering questions was the central point of his speeches. He also spoke at length. When time allowed, he would go on speaking for three or four hours.

At that time, one train ran from Nirmali to Samastipur. There was no trace of the broad-gauge line anywhere. Yet this too was one of the issues in the struggle of the Communist Party. Sometimes the struggle moved fiercely, sometimes at a slower pace, but it continued.

The trains coming from both the east and the west were supposed to meet at Sakri, but that did not happen. Since the crossing took place at Kakraghati, the train from the west was delayed. For that reason, the meeting was organised somewhat late. The venue was arranged a little away from Sakri station, on the southern side.

After getting down from the train, the people formed a procession, waving flags and raising slogans, and reached the meeting place. Many people from around Jhanjharpur also joined them. The organisers were comrades from the sugar mill workers' union.

At that time, the mill ran only for six months. Since there was work for only six months in the year, the problem of remaining idle for the other six months naturally existed. Along with this, the farmers faced their own difficulties: neither was sugarcane harvested in time, nor did they receive payment in time.

Those problems too remained. Only one variety of sugarcane was cultivated, which became ready in Aghan. But because it was grown over a large area, timely harvesting was not possible. The mills were few. They would take only as much as they could crush. Their cleverness lay in this: since the crop became ready early, good production, meaning sugar content, began from the very beginning; and the more it was delayed, the thicker the juice became and the greater the sugar content.

As soon as the train from the west arrived, Bhogendraji, with Khadim Hussain, the MLA from Darbhanga-Jale, walked ahead from the station to the meeting place, carrying a leather bag in his hand, while ten or fifteen people followed behind. He was wearing

a half-shirt and dhoti. On his feet were leather shoes.

From the stage, slogans began to be raised. More than half the stage was filled. The speaker who had been addressing the gathering completed his remarks. The leader of the sugar mill trade union placed their problems in detail. Jagdish Prasad Mandal and others were seated on the ground in front.

As was usual in Bhogendraji's meetings, before he spoke, there was an appeal for questions. A few questions were indeed asked.

After two and a half or three hours, the meeting came to an end. The people from the surrounding areas who had attended the meeting went away, but those who had come by train returned to the station. Both trains, the one to Nirmali and the one to Jaynagar, were late by an hour or an hour and a half. It was there, at the station itself, that Jagdish Prasad Mandalji had his first meeting and direct personal introduction with Bhogendraji.

For the first time, Bhogendraji had become a Member of Parliament. Just as in 1942 a new political consciousness had awakened among the people of the country against the British, something similar happened after the election of 1967. In Bihar too, political parties that had never before reached the Legislative Assembly came into a position of strength. The party that had remained in power in Bihar until then, the Congress, tasted a clear defeat.

And this did not happen in Bihar alone; it happened in several other states as well. A group had broken away from the Congress and entered the election under the name Jan Kranti Dal. The anti-Congress parties gained a clear majority. As the main party, the Socialist Party won, and, in varying degrees, other parties also succeeded.

It was not merely that such a change took place in the Legislative Assembly; the common people in village after village also felt their own victory and defeat in it. Whatever may have happened in practical terms, in the course of speeches and in matters of principle, all the problems of the people certainly came to the fore. The reason was that the ideas of all these parties had already been reaching the people for some time.

Thirty-four seats, that is, thirty-four MLAs, reached the Legislative Assembly, and five to seven members of the Communist Party also reached Parliament.

For the first time after Independence, ordinary people moved towards power, towards governance. Until then, in the minds of the common people, government meant little more than quota kerosene oil and a few essential rationed goods. Governance seemed to run only through the accounts of the dealer's work. Other problems existed only in the sequence of speeches. Flood or drought of one kind or another kept occurring, and it was the government's claim that it had measures to deal with them.

A new generation, born around the time of Independence or after it, also became young. With this, other kinds of governmental work too came into view. What is now Madhubani district was, in those days, a subdivision. It was divided among eleven MLAs and two MPs, roughly one MP for every six MLAs. The Jale constituency of Darbhanga too fell within Madhubani then.

In the western part of present-day Madhubani district, the struggle over land was also proceeding with some force, but the main question was the Western Kosi Canal. The damage caused year after year in Mithilanchal by the Kosi, Kamala, and Bagmati is perhaps greater than the budget of many governments. Be that as it may, the questions, problems, and struggles of the 1960s formed the principal struggle of the Communist Party.

What condition that struggle is in even after one human lifetime, sixty-five or sixty-six years, is visible before everyone. If work had been done according to plan, today's Mithila would not have been this Mithila; it would have become the Mithila in which sages and seers were believed to bring rain at will. So much hydroelectric power would have been produced that it would have reached every home. Along with small industries on the model of Japan, heavy industries too would have been established. But what do we see today? Elections kept taking place, MLAs and MPs kept changing, yet the problems have now assumed such a frightening form that, under economic distress, looting and plunder take place in broad daylight, both directly and indirectly.

If the per-acre yield of land in Japan, Germany, and the

neighbouring country of China is compared with that of Mithilanchal, one would not merely be surprised; one would find it difficult to believe. Does Mithila have only three-and-a-half cubits of human body, with a stomach alone, or does it also have two hands, two feet, and a motherland?

Mithilanchal possesses a land and climate found nowhere else in the world. Nowhere is there such beautiful, soft soil; nowhere such good water; nowhere such variety of seasons. And yet what do we see today? Even now, there has been no proper agreement with the Government of Nepal, nor has there been proper development of the western and eastern canals of the Kosi.

First, the work of the plan was delayed; on top of that, the twists and complications in the work are such that even building a single canal becomes difficult, and after it is built, making it function properly becomes still more difficult. Water comes easily from above to below. But will it go easily from below to above? It will not. If a canal is dug deep, how will its water rise upward? Yes, it can go up through machines; but then, as the saying goes, "the house is in confusion, and the wedding is on Monday." In a place where cultivation is still done with the three-span plough of the Treta age and the sacred bullocks of the Satya age, how is such a thing to be believed?

Returning to the station, that is, to Sakri platform, everyone sat in a circle. Bhogendraji sat cross-legged and asked everyone else to sit in the same way. Everyone's mind was restless about catching the train. To sit cross-legged meant a kind of ease, a release from worry. First he asked everyone's name and address. After hearing their names and addresses, he said:

"The Communist Party is our own party. But by saying our own party, I do not mean that it belongs to any particular caste or religion. It is the party of human beings as such. We have to build a society in which no one remains hungry and no one remains naked. Everyone's children should study; everyone should have treatment for illness, disease, and natural calamity. Only then will all people try to move forward.

What did the sages and seers of our land do? Did they not care for their own happiness? Why did they consume their lives in

such a way? They did a great deal. If they had not, how could they have lived their lives on a single katha of land? But if we keep our heritage locked away, who will understand it? Lakhanji, Dr Lakshman Jha, dedicated his life to Mithilanchal. But who understands what he did?"

Before leaving for Delhi, Bhogendraji told Jagdish Prasad Mandalji at the district office of the Communist Party:

"When I come next, I shall certainly go to Berma. So keep an eye on that."

Just as in a market, or even in a village household, the exchange of goods takes place among three kinds of people, there is first the person who has the goods, and second, the buyer. But between these two a third also slips in, and that third is necessity. When both the seller and the buyer are in need of the goods, the dealing becomes easy. The reason is that, by selling or buying the goods, a necessary task has to be accomplished.

The second situation is when the seller is in greater need because of some urgent work, while the buyer is in no hurry. In such a case, the seller suffers loss and the buyer remains in profit. Similarly, there are situations in which the buyer is needy and the seller is not. There, the buyer suffers loss and the seller remains in profit, for the seller keeps thinking inwardly that even a stone rots in water. In the same way, among buyers too there are those who think: does money bite like an insect that one should throw it away for nothing?

This middle element is the artist of the world; it makes not only itself but the whole world dance. From the beginning, people on one side have created difficult circumstances for people on the other side and have kept pressing their throats. But this did not happen here.

Just as the people of Berma were eager to know about Bhogendraji's programme, so too were Bhogendraji and the Communist Party eager about Berma. The Sakri meeting began to be discussed with great enthusiasm in Berma village. On one side, everyone became engaged in making the programme as good as possible; on the other, having found a new area, Bhogendraji and the party too began to think of making the programme better and

better.

Of course, once before 1967, the Communist Party had been formed in Berma, but because the practical side was weak, it could not endure. The party had been formed among young men, most of whom were more or less educated. No one among them understood the methods and procedures of the party properly. So, by feeling their way, they learned a little here and a little there. Talk ranging from the sky to the netherworld flew about and reached everyone's ears, and because of that some enthusiasm was always kept alive. If that had not been so, how could character have been formed here in contrast to other, capitalist parties? It is struggle that sharpens character.

On the third day after the parliamentary session ended, Bhogendraji reached Madhubani. Until then, people did not know Bhogendraji in such a way that they could be certain whether he would come or not. The uncertainty was natural, because many programmes had already taken place in which leaders had not arrived.

The very morning after Parliament ended, Bhogendraji had already reached Patna. For the first time, a large number of anti-Congress MPs from Bihar had reached Delhi. In Bihar too, an opposition government had been formed under the leadership of Mahamaya Prasad Singh. Karpoori Thakur became Deputy Chief Minister. Mahamaya Babu, in fact, had broken away from the Congress and formed the Jan Kranti Dal.

In the Bihar government, the Socialist Party had the largest number of MLAs, and therefore it had a larger share in the government. Dhaniklal Mandal had won for the first time, and yet he became Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. From the quota of the Communist Party of India, two cabinet ministers and two ministers of state were appointed. From the Darbhanga district quota, Tejnarayanji, Shri Tej Narayan Jha, became a minister of state.

All four of them, however, were hardworking in their respective fields. Just as Indradeep Bhai, Shri Indradeep Singh, was a scholar and economist, Chandrashekhar Bhai, Shri Chandra Shekhar Singh, too was a revolutionary. Shri Shatrughna Besra was

a leader of the Adivasis, while Tejnarayanji was a farmers' leader. The government, already swaying in many factions and currents, was shaken still more by the drought.

Along with being a farmers' leader, Bhogendraji was also a leader of Bihar, and therefore the burden of work upon him had become very heavy. After reaching Patna, the first day passed in discussions on the condition of the state. But from the next morning itself, he had set aside time for his constituency. Travelling through the night, he reached Madhubani. As soon as he arrived there, everyone came to know:

"Tomorrow Bhogendraji will be present at the programme in Berma."

In any case, everyone had been publicising the event. Pamphlets had also been printed and brought. There would be a public meeting during the day and a workers' meeting at night. Arrangements for food and drink had also been made.

At the last hour of the public meeting, after five o'clock, Bhogendraji reached Berma by jeep. Those present at the meeting had begun to think that he would not come now. There were, of course, no telephones and such means of contact as exist today. Before Bhogendraji arrived, the public meeting had almost turned lifeless; but as soon as he came, its colour and form seemed to change. Many who had already risen and taken to the road turned back. At the same time, some new people also arrived.

Getting down from the jeep, Bhogendraji said:

"Give me a glass of water and some tea. Until then I shall sit on the stage."

People were in a hurry; now that Bhogendraji had arrived, why waste his time unnecessarily? On the stage, Bhogendraji sat quietly, watching and listening. He drank water and then had tea.

As soon as he had finished his tea, he was requested to speak. On being requested, he said:

"Ask everyone whether anyone has any question to put."

But everyone was eager to listen, and therefore not a single question came.

As he stood up, he briefly laid out the condition of the

Congress government in Delhi: how, at that time, the country was caught in a conflict among capitalists, factory owners, and feudal interests, the kings and princes. Discussing this conflict, he said that the development of the country had been obstructed. But very few people understood this. For the villagers, the meaning of government was limited to quota wheat and the police station; here and there, a hand-pump too would be installed.

By then, there were also quotas for sugar and kerosene oil. Wheat too was available under the quota system, but because buyers lacked money, this was not clearly felt.

After speaking of the Delhi government, Bhogendraji immediately turned to the Bihar government. He laid bare the condition of the drought, its dreadful severity, and the inner state of the Bihar government. He spoke at length about the Kosi canal and what that project meant for Mithilanchal.

While discussing Mithilanchal, he also spoke in detail about the social exploitation of the region, the kind that prevents one person from allowing another to move forward, and similar matters.

Bhogendraji's speeches generally lasted from two to four hours, but that did not happen in Berma. By the time an hour was completed, the time was over. As soon as the meeting ended, he said:

"There is, of course, also a programme for a workers' meeting, but it cannot be held properly now. Still, if you make the preparation, it will be done in whatever time I have."

Meanwhile, tea arrived. He did not take any refreshments. While drinking tea, he also spoke of the Ayyar Commission, which was to inquire into the irregularities committed by certain Congress leaders who had been in government.

Considering that it was the first public meeting of the Communist Party in Berma, it had gone very well. Bhogendraji himself said so.

As soon as the workers' meeting began, Bhogendraji's form seemed to change. He said:

"The Communist Party is a political party. You have become

members of the party and have formed the party here; the responsibility of sustaining it will also rest upon you. Consider yourselves members of a revolutionary party, and change and improve the social order.

Until the social order changes, a society for the welfare of all cannot be built. And until such a society is built, some people will continue to loot, and some people will continue to be looted. You will earn, and someone else will eat.

But the party is spread from the village to the whole world. Therefore, you must learn the ways and methods of staying united with one another. Loot and plunder are going on from the village to the whole world, and this is not an ordinary thing. It has every kind of power behind it. The power needed to face that power will have to be built.

At present I too am in a hurry, so I shall not be able to explain everything properly. When I have some ease, I shall come again. For now, let me say a few basic things.

You have formed the party in the village; take up the problems of the village. All members of the party should sit together and think about those problems. Society is formed with people. If even as many of you as are here remain united and work towards solutions, those solutions will come more easily.

Of course, breaking the system is not as easy as we think. Along with attacks from opponents, there will be differences within our own party, and there will also be differences within families.

You have made very good arrangements for food and drink. All of you should sit together and eat and drink; only then will the disease of untouchability in eating and drinking break. Until that breaks, divisions of the mind will continue.

Hold meetings regularly. Until you have your own party office, hold meetings in each neighbourhood. What is the problem of that neighbourhood, and how can it be solved? That is the main work of the meeting.

This is at the social level, but along with it there are other fields as well. If a problem is taken up and a demonstration is held at the block office, it will be a demonstration of the party from the

whole block. In that, the problems of Berma too should be made an issue. The same happens at the district level. It happens in the state capital too, and in Delhi as well. You must participate in all of them. There will be problems on both sides, and therefore the larger problem above becomes important."

He was indeed in a hurry, and around nine o'clock he left. After he had gone, food and drink were served. The programme came to an end.

A new vision was born in the village. The process began of understanding the village differently from the way people had understood it earlier. Even otherwise, whenever four people came together, some work would begin. Earlier too, some people had been cooperative in social work, but that circle had narrowed and become confined to a few families. To keep one's own work and one's own matters hidden had become a habit, and it remains so even now.

When one lives and speaks among four people, the practice of speaking begins to develop. Along with this, it also happens that one repeats the same thing two or three times, or says something new.

After joining the party, Jagdish Prasad Mandalji began to take part even in rallies in Delhi. He began to meet new people, and in terms of region, he also began to receive opportunities to see new arts and cultures. Along with this, it also happened that for two annas or four annas, good books became available to him. Through them, Jagdish Prasad Mandalji began to acquire new kinds of knowledge.❑

AFTER 1967: POLITICAL AWAKENING AND SOCIAL COMMITMENT

☰

After 1967, a second current of air began to rise, from the village to the whole country. But the nature and limits of the wind are different in different places. Somewhere, over sandy land, it dries up its own moisture; somewhere, over the sea, it raises a tide. Somewhere, it strikes against mountains and either flies towards the clouds or searches for a side passage and escapes. Somewhere, on level land, it uproots trees and plants; somewhere, it creates ripples on the surface of a pond; and somewhere, it also brings a gentle and pleasant breeze.

Those who should have received the benefit of the opportunity did not receive it to the extent they should have. If that was not so, and if they did receive it, then why did the agricultural sector fall behind in comparison with the industrial sector? One may say in anger that Maharashtra and Karnataka advanced in industry while Bihar remained backward, but that would be speaking in anger. If we look at the industries of Maharashtra or Karnataka, we must also look at the condition of those who live on the land there. Is it false that, in comparison with Bihar, farmers there have been driven to the point of suicide?

Therefore, every state of the country has its own problems. Each has to be seen in its own way. Yet is it not proper that Bihar too is a part of independent India, and that there should be some measure of uniformity? Today, not only Bihar but many other

states have problems greater than those of Bihar, and their solution too is necessary. Perhaps not in the same manner as Bengal or Kerala, but if one looks at other states as well, one sees similar pressures at work. Mithilanchal too did not remain untouched by this second current.

In Madhubani subdivision of the old Darbhanga district, which is now a district, considerable uniformity of land appeared; but a field is truly a field only when it receives sufficient water. Along with proper seed and proper fertiliser, it also needs skilled farmers with machines.

For ten years before this, progressive farmers and intellectuals had risen and stood behind the Kosi canal project, but there was no one to listen. Even when something was heard, the work took such a form that even in fifty years the project could not be completed. Such carelessness was shown towards the streams and channels that more than half the land of Mithilanchal has turned from soil into sand.

There are, of course, many streams, and among them some have not changed their course for thousands of years. But the Kosi, Kamala, and Balan have been welcomed so much, even while they ran and played, while people sang songs to them, that they have rendered more than half the land powerless and weak. How will sand become fertile land? This is no small question.

The political condition is such that everyone, running after mouth-leadership and empty prominence, remains entangled among themselves. No problem of Mithilanchal belongs only to Mithila; it belongs to the country. Yet all are doing politics by entangling themselves in the very question of how the problem is to be solved. They merely listen at eight o'clock at night, on the sitar, to "Pawan Priya Pawan Mithila Desh!"

Just as Berma is a part of the country, so too the country is a part of Berma. Therefore, the second current of the country also blew through Berma. Like the overwinding of a bicycle, the winding of the village began. Winds of many colours entered Berma village all at once. Groupism began. Some sparks rose from within the village, and some began to enter quietly from outside.

Until then, the wind of caste and communal division had not

entered the village. Whenever fights or disturbances occurred, they either took place with another village or between one hamlet and another. Berma was a village of more than twenty castes. Confusion and disorder had always occurred during festivals and ritual observances. Yet life had continued.

And why should there not be such confusion? More than half the women observed the Sunday fast of Bhadav. But the rules of festivals too differed from one group to another. Some observed a strict fast on both evenings; some only for one evening. Some avoided only salt; some gave up grain and lived only on fruit. In the same way, there was the ghari festival. First, it occurred in two or three months of the year, Sawan, Asin, and Chait; then there were also the Wednesday ghari, Monday ghari, and Saturday ghari.

Preachers of the Kabir Panth would come from time to time, denounce the snare of maya, and also warn their devotees. The devotees too were of many kinds. In Berma, the confusion was still greater. On one side stood the Brahmin settlement of a hundred households, called a tola not because it was united as a social cluster but because it was scattered in its own way; there was not a single Vaishnav among them. From the point of view of the secular temperament of society, this was perhaps for the good.

On the other side, there was also the settlement of the Dalits. Their range of ritual practice extended from the plate and water to the sky itself. The castes in between were linked with different religious sects. Within the same caste, disputes continued between Vaishnavs and Shakts; and along with that, disputes also continued between one caste and another.

A compromise was reached within the Kabir Panth. It was decided that after the shraddha rites, there would be Satyanarayan Puja, and after that a Kabir Panthi bhandara as well. And so it began. On the one hand, people would speak against another sect, and on the other, they would continue to live together. Even then, the Kabir Panth was strong; it had many supporters, and it still has them today.

Meanwhile, an incident arose within the Mandal, that is, Dhanuk caste. Subey Das of Dwalkh had influence among the Mandals, the mukhiyas, the Dhanuks and Mallahs, and also among

the Barais. The influence of the Ramaut sect in the village was limited. In Nanaur, Buddhi Das had become the mahant of the Ramaut sect. Through agnatic connections he came to Berma and, within his own kin-group, gave a kanthi to one person and made him a disciple. That agnate became a devotee. Subey Das also used to come once a year for a month, but if a bhandara took place somewhere in between, a group would be sent to invite him as well.

The disciple of the man from Nanaur was made his own disciple, from Ramaut into Kabir Panthi. On one side, the Shakts would be warned without restraint; on the other, plundering and exploitation continued. When the devotee was taken away, Buddhi Das of Nanaur issued an order:

"Just as I gave the mantra into his ear and he took another mantra, in the same way I shall heat mustard oil and pour it into his ear, and with it I shall draw out the mantra that has gone in."

The blow fell upon the drum. The man from Dwalkh replied that Buddhi Das's own sect was weak. How would any soul attain release through that? Let him first make a proper offering. If he does not, and pours oil into the disciple's ear, that will not be allowed.

Tension began to rise. This became the main subject of talk at every doorway and courtyard in the village. Some people in society were pleased that the quarrel was merely between Dhanuks themselves; on the other hand, caste pride had also been hurt. For just as a Communist Party rally breaks the old enclosure and brings people out onto the road, so among those in society who followed the Kabir Panth, a certain uniformity had come in matters of eating and drinking.

Among Kabir Panthis, the bhandara is an important foundation. Just as at Jagannath there is shared prasad, in the Kabir Panth too the custom of sharing consecrated food among one another exists.

In the tension between the Kabir Panth and the Ramaut sect, the village began to divide. It split into three or four groups.

The organisation of the Ramaut sect was weaker than that of the Kabir Panth. Kabir Panthis from one village, two villages, and several other villages began preparing to enter the field. Jagdar is a

village adjoining Berma. In the surrounding region, the two are known together as Jagdar-Berma. Jagdar is a small village. Bhumihar Brahmins and Rajputs are in the majority there. There are also Barhis, Yadavs, Telis, Dusadhs, Dhuniyas, Sonars, and Mallahs, but they are minorities.

In Jagdar, Nathuni Singh held the leadership, and eighty per cent of the Bhumihars were his lathaits. Because of this, the business of quarrels and disputes continued across the five-kos area. Nathuni Singh of Jagdar was also a Kabir Panthi. He was a devotee of a Rajput saint from Lohia Patti. They were fewer in number, but powerful.

As a sectarian society, Jagdar was divided into several groups. The Rajputs stood towards the Kabir Panth, the Bhumihars towards the Radha-Krishna sect, the Yadavs, Barhis, and Dusadhs towards the Kabir Panth, and the Dhuniyas towards Islam. As for the Mallahs, they were naturally people of the plate-and-water way of life; why would they go into the Vaishnav sect?

Hearing the rumour of the Kabir Panthi quarrel, the saint from Lohia Patti came to Jagdar and set up his seat there. He also sent word to other devotees to come. Like the battlefield of the Mahabharata, the soil of Berma began to tremble.

A time was fixed for the scriptural debate. The village turned into something like a fair. The eyes of the whole surrounding region were fixed upon Berma. But what happened was proper and right: Buddhi Das of Nanaur stepped back a little and saved the village from violence and rioting.

Jagdish Prasad Mandalji's family was still more many-coloured. On one side were all the festivals of society connected with the village shrine. On another was his father, a devotee of the father of Subey Das. In the Kabir Panth, the person called a sevak is called a disciple elsewhere. Jagdish Prasad Mandalji's father was influenced by Kabir Panthi thought. Satsang and bhajan continued for nearly a month at a time at the doorway.

On the third side was Jagdish Prasad Mandalji's mother, a devotee of the Saho-Patnia group of Samastipur district. She had brought that teaching with her from her parental home. Her tradition was a third sect: the guru would make both Vaishnavs and

Shakts his disciples by giving them the mantra. Once a year, while travelling about, he too would come and stay for five to seven days. He was a Brahmin and cooked his own food.

This was the reason why no animal sacrifice took place at the Durga Sthan in Berma. One site was linked with the Vaishnav sect, and at the other Nathuni Singh's dominance prevailed; therefore, sacrifice did not take place.

Just as rice and water placed in a pot on the hearth may turn into half-cooked rice, over-boiled rice, sweetened rice, khichri, or even fine cooked rice, so the rice and water placed in the vessel of Berma's Durga Puja produced many things at once. Until then, in the region, Durga Puja had generally been the worship of one caste or of a mahant's establishment; that received a blow.

Along with this, another blow was struck: with the participation of unmarried girls from every caste, the evening lamp-offering also reached all sections. This was publicised in other villages as well. On the other side, the absence of sacrifice too took on a distinct colour. These very circumstances gave Berma's Durga Puja a political form.

Between the two Durga Puja sites of Berma village, a deep trench was created. One site remained that of the wider society, while the other became linked with power. The reason for its link with power was that the pramukh of Madhepur block was himself from Berma. Madhepur was a block of twenty-eight panchayats. In effect, the divide did not stand on caste basis, but on political basis.

Across Madhepur, there were mukhiyas of many castes. Only the Muslim mukhiyas remained apart; otherwise the support of almost all was there. The reason was that, whatever the caste might be, the meaning of mukhiya was Congress. Because of that, the office too was one-sided and inclined in one direction. They used both weapons. Where the knot of caste could be tied, they used caste; where that could not be done, they applied political colour.

Thus, in the form of donations, the matter began moving towards employment and advantage. The block office too began, as it were, to rise and reach the Durga Sthan. On the day of the fair, someone would arrive either with applications for a new scheme or

to distribute something.

The first benefit of Durga Puja to the villagers was that, leaving aside a few persons, most families received old-age pension. Berma, the smallest panchayat in the block, became the place where the largest number of people received old-age pension for the first time.

But within, there was a strong reaction. Some people remained angry because of the sacrificial prasad, while for others the dispute itself became a topic of discussion from village to village.

A turn also came in the politics of the village. The reason was that the caste structure within the village itself had many colours. In the Durga Puja, the Brahmins had, in fact, been divided. They had support at both sites. On one side, Pandit Vyakaranacharya Udit Narayan Jha became the priest; on the other, the Vedic grammarian Pandit Kameshwar Jha took that role.

In the 1962 election for panchayat mukhiya, a Brahmin mukhiya both lost and won. Bachnu Mishra, who did not know letters, nevertheless belonged, by virtue of the honesty with which he carried out his work, not merely to the village but to the category of leaders of the whole area. Bachnu Mishra himself did not become mukhiya, but his supporter was the mukhiya. After defeat, he suffered a setback in politics.

In the election of Sarsath, the Congress had suffered a severe blow. The leader of Madhepur block was Janaki Babu, Shri Janakinandan Singh, who had been an MLA and had represented the area. He had broken away and joined Mahamaya Babu in the Jan Kranti Dal. The benefit went to the Socialist Party, and Vasudev Babu, Shri Vasudev Prasad Mahato, became MLA. ❑

THE STRUCTURE OF CASTE

☰

The Brahmins of Berma are divided into five sections. In the name of elections, they would appear united, but in social conduct, distance remained among them. When the Communist Party was first formed in 1962, it was the Brahmins who had broken away and formed it. Each of the five sections had its own separate social world. There was distance even in storytelling, kinship relations, and matters of eating and drinking.

Among the Barais, Koeris, and Keots, there was a certain uniformity. This uniformity lay in the fact that their eating and drinking practices, festivals, and ritual observances were of one kind. The Dhanuks were divided into two sections, and they remain so even today. The distance between the two is considerable. The reason is that, from long before, one section of the Dhanuks had worked as khabas, household servants, while the other had lived as cultivators and built an agrarian life.

Similarly, the Mallahs too were divided. The Musahar families were strong in number, but divisions kept appearing among them as well. The reason was that, in any feast or ritual occasion, not everyone could feed everyone else, and this kept them divided among themselves.

From the block at Madhepur down to the village, the blows that came from every side struck Bachnu Mishra deeply. His old companions renounced active involvement. In the name of principle, they had offered their votes. Bachnu Mishra's mind was affected, and he began speaking here and there, without order or restraint. The result was that, by repeatedly dipping him in the

pond, they rubbed him so much that a severe wound formed on his back. He underwent an operation in Darbhanga, and only then did the wound heal. ❑

BEFORE THE DURGA STHAN WAS BUILT IN BERMA

☰

Before the Durga Sthan was built in Berma village, there were many shrines, small and large, and in one form or another they still exist. Baldev Babu of Sarisab Pahi built a Shiva temple on the northern embankment of the large pond in memory of his son. By present standards, the temple may not seem very special, but on the day it was built, it was a beautiful temple. It collapsed, of course, in the earthquake of 1988, but the sanctity of the place shone even more brightly. Durga Puja is also held on that very ground, and the Muslims' Daha fair is held there as well. At the fair, the traders as well as the spectators are often from Hindu families.

The second shrine is a combined shrine of Radha-Krishna, Ram-Janaki, Hanuman, and Mahadev. Ram-Janaki and Radha-Krishna are worshipped at the same place. It is a very old shrine. Baudhu Das had built it.

Baudhu Das was a pure vairagi, an ascetic detached from worldly life. He had no family, but he had truly made the shrine into a living sacred place. At least once, he would certainly go around the entire village himself and speak warmly with everyone. People too would, with eagerness and affection, say to him:

"Baba, today's sidha will be from our side."

He used to move about alone. He had, in fact, built a thakurbari, though without idols. He held the sorrow and suffering of people in his heart. Unable to bear the injustice of the sahib of

the indigo factory at Bhakhrauli, Sukhet, an English trader, he told all the people of Berma:

"He must be driven away. Taking land on lease upon lease, he is swallowing up all the fields."

Carrying the one-and-a-half-cubit staff with which he used to walk every day, Baudhu Das stepped forward. He did not merely step forward; he showed, by action, what could be done.

At that very shrine came Mahavir Das. Born into a poor family and trained in the Kabir Panth, he eventually arrived there. By this time, Baudhu Das had also grown old, and he kept Mahavir Das with him. Mahavir Das was, of course, a Vaishnav, yet Baudhu Das's influence remained strong upon him. Because of that influence, he married only at a very advanced age.

Mahavir Das, who came from an ordinary background, was exceptionally liberal in outlook. Though he was a Bhumihar, he would eat rice and roti in every household, considering them all Kabir Panthi families. He also acquired knowledge of healing, and his reputation as a vaidya expanded greatly. Seeing his growing income, people arranged his marriage, and he too agreed to it. By then, the shrine had acquired around five bighas of land donated by the community.

Mahavir Das used opium, but by temperament he was remarkably generous. He earned a name throughout the surrounding region. Whoever came to the court of God, the thakurbari, whether a celebrated musician or the humblest visitor, he would send away satisfied to the best of his ability. Thus it happened with Darbari Das of the region, Chhathu Das, Hitai Das, and Lakhan Das, whose dholak player later became famous in Bombay, as well as performers of drama, nautanki, and other arts. He treated all of them in the same spirit. His nature was such that whenever the intoxication of opium rose to his head, he would distribute gifts freely among the people.

The third shrine of the village was the Brahm Sthan. Even today, the shrine possesses more than a bigha of land, and a pucca building stands there. Nearby are the Anganwadi centre and the Dharamraj Sthan. As long as Pandit Upendra Mishra, an acharya of the Vedas, grammar, literature, and astrology, was alive, he

conducted a fifteen-day Bhagavata recitation every year during the month of Kartik at the Brahm Sthan.

He was, however, so serious and restrained that he would not utter a single unnecessary word. Because of this, half-learned pandits mocked him, saying he had no tongue at all. Treating the place as his own, he would bring a wooden seat from his home in the village, perform the required rituals before taking his seat, and then sit down. The first two or three days would pass merely in spreading the news, but as word traveled, listeners gradually began to gather, and arrangements for continuing the Bhagavata recitation would also take shape.

There was also a Mahavirji Sthan. On the embankment of the pond, near a half-dry jackfruit tree, a sacred flag was planted and the shrine established. Worship began there, and then something remarkable occurred. The half-dry jackfruit tree seemed to drink water and regain its strength. It began to flourish. Though it was only a medium-sized tree, it appeared as if the power of fruit-bearing had entered every branch and leaf. It started yielding between one hundred and fifty and two hundred and fifty fruits. True, three-fourths of them lacked proper flesh and were mostly rind, yet the tree nevertheless deepened the shrine's aura and influence. News of it spread throughout the region.

Ashtayam kirtan began there on Ramnavami in the month of Chait. During the festival, between three and five maunds of wheat-and-rice prasad would be prepared and distributed by the handful. A wooden mandap was erected, and after the immersion ceremony, nagar kirtan would take place. Four men would lift the mandap and carry it throughout the village, while behind them the community followed with kirtan and bhajan. Whoever felt inspired would offer whatever they could, and from those offerings musical instruments were purchased.

Similarly, the Musahars performed worship during the month of Asin, and they continue to do so even now. Carrying mridang and cymbals, groups of ten would travel around the entire village collecting donations, and from these contributions the expenses of the worship were met. In the same spirit, the Muslims too prepare the daha and carry it throughout the village. Such

brotherhood has long endured in Berma.

Likewise, every year Durga Puja is celebrated at two different places. At the Mahavirji Sthan there are dozens of Ashtayams and Navahs. A three-day conference of Kabir Panthi saints is organized, literary seminars are held in abundance, and kirtan and bhajan continue in courtyards and at village doorways. Not only that, but three mahants belonging to different sects, along with half a dozen kirtan groups who earn their livelihood through performance, continue to remain active there. After all, it is the society of Mithila.

On one side, the election at Sarsath had already stirred a new current, and on top of that, the Bhagwati shrine of Berma, established in 1969, also opened its doors. Contact and exchange between the village and neighboring communities increased. Both currents began to flow together. On one side, Durga Puja spread among all castes; on the other, the hearts of the young filled with enthusiasm to do something new.

Yet society is vaster even than the sea. It is difficult to know everything that moves within it. One visible aspect, however, was the pledging and exchange of money, ornaments, and jewellery between the parental and marital homes through women. It became impossible to tell which village's jewellery had gone to which other village. Moneylending and other economic dealings also continued between villages.

The prestige of zamindari becomes hereditary prestige. If it did not, then although the English sahib had gone, how would the seed of sahibhood still remain scattered everywhere? Many threads of caste and sectarian relationships were tied to respectable men, moneylenders, and zamindars.

Among those who lent money to the people of Berma, the moneylenders from the forward castes stood foremost. There was only one lender from the backward castes, and his business remained small. The rules of traders differ from those of zamindars. Be that as it may, the priests announced that they would stop performing shraddha rites and marriage ceremonies. A serious question then stood before the villagers: what would happen now?

The Kabir Panthi saints found their opening and began to

advance rapidly. The fire rising within society paused for a moment. The Kabir Panthis were such that they could set fire even to the house they intended to settle in. They gave society the idea of release and liberation, but they did not speak of the question of the present. "What am I today?" That is everyone's question.

Kabir has a line:

"Sai itna dijiye…"

But when the question arises of who will give, and from where, a little light turns into confusion. In the same way, their thought places itself above the foundation of maya, and because of that, illumination itself turns into darkness.

Spirituality is such a path that it teaches a human being how to become truly human. It not only teaches the art of living, but also imparts a wisdom that people often describe as the making of a "superman." Who does not desire to become greater than ordinary? Yet why does it remain impossible? In a forest, lakhs of trees stand together and withstand gusts of wind and storm. And yet…

The demand of the twenty-first century is that human beings should become free and move freely. But where even roads and pathways are unsafe, Delhi itself no longer feels far away; it feels near. Then one may as well leave the matter there: the one who played the game repented, and the one who did not play also repented.

From around 1960 onward, Jagdish Prasad Mandal became increasingly involved in agriculture. He began cultivating chillies, brinjal, cabbage, potatoes, and other crops. Paddy, marua, and rabi crops such as mustard also began to be grown under his personal supervision. His elder brother, however, had little interest in farming. Besides this, he had studied amanat and land measurement. Stories and disputes relating to land were so endless that they could continue for an entire month without conclusion. Yet every person dreams something for his own life.

His elder brother developed an inclination toward dance. But bringing forth the art of the poor is no easy matter. Even so, life moved on.

After coming into contact with Bhogendraji, Jagdish Prasad

Mandal's curiosity about agriculture deepened further. Bhogendraji sharpened his thinking by describing examples of farming in Germany and Japan. When Jagdish calculated matters for himself, it seemed that even ten kathas of land could be sufficient for a family of five.

He also reflected upon the farmers of Siberia, where six or eight months of the year pass merely in waiting for the snow to melt. Yet during the short span available, they cultivate so intensively that they achieve remarkable yields.

Today, much of Mithilanchal may have turned sandy, with layers of sand covering the soil. The problem is so severe that just as sand rose from beneath and swallowed the land, so too must the farmer reclaim that land with his own labor, working through and absorbing the sand itself. Bihar's true capital lies in its fields. The more prosperous agriculture becomes, the more prosperous the state itself will become.

On one side, the field was capital in one's own hands; on the other, once Jagdish Prasad Mandalji became connected with politics, his work expanded further. He began trying to move toward agriculture in a proper and organized way. From the Pusa fair, he started bringing books on farming and cultivation. Along with this, he also began attending farmers' programmes. Because of his connection with politics, he also started visiting courts and government offices.

In Madhepur block, Zubair Sahib was the P.O. He was a very decent man, with a strong sense of warmth and belonging. Jagdish Prasad Mandal came into contact with him. Zubair Sahib was an agriculture graduate. Like a teacher in a school or college, he would explain matters of agriculture to people for hours. Through this contact, whenever he had a programme anywhere, he would certainly inform Jagdish Prasad Mandalji. At the agricultural colleges in Pusa and Dholi, there used to be one large programme every year, while smaller programmes continued throughout the year.

Before 1960, there was not a single boring or pump-set in Berma village. The first was installed in 1971–72 by the late Satya Dev Jha. He was not formally educated, but he had found

employment with the Eveready Battery Company in Calcutta and had retired from service. He had also acquired some knowledge of Bengal's agriculture. He thought that if he bought five bighas of land and installed a boring, his condition would improve the following year. He did exactly that. His boring was the first in the village.

Once people gained knowledge of agriculture, they began to understand the importance of water. A political party had already been formed. After the drought of Sarsath, the plan for borings and pump-sets also took shape, though it remained uncertain and fragile. A meeting of the B.D.C. was held in Berma village. The D.M. also came, and all the block officials were present. As a kind of gift, the D.M. Sahib spoke about borings and pump-sets with a one-third subsidy. He also discussed the condition and direction of farmers. Dividing farmers into four categories, he explained the benefits available to each.

Jagdish Prasad Mandal and four others, five farmers in all, decided that this opportunity must be used. From Pusa and Dholi to the district and block levels, he attended farmers' fairs and seminars wherever they were held. The five farmers decided to install borings, though two eventually did not. After the borings were installed, they began bringing in new seeds of paddy, wheat, and other crops. The paddy yield achieved in the 1970s surpassed what was being achieved even in 2012. Sita paddy, a fine-grained and tasty variety, began yielding one and a quarter quintals per katha. Not only paddy and wheat, but also potatoes, cabbage, tomatoes, and other crops gained strength. The village, once pressed under debt, began to stand on its own feet.

The zamindars too had left the village. Only one remained, who, according to estimates, held one hundred and ten bighas of land. Later, a fierce struggle took place over that land.

In the B.D.C. meeting, the D.M. Sahib had spoken at length about usurious moneylenders. At the same time, he made it clear: "Any moneylender who takes more than double will face legal action."

The debtors felt relieved. They thought that whenever they were able to pay, they would pay. If they did not have the means,

where would they pay from? But the moneylenders launched their attack. Seizures and arrests began.

Along with agriculture, other kinds of work also began in the village. All the embankments and roads of Berma were built according to the map. As a result, the very shape and outline of the village changed. This happened through public cooperation. Later, through government schemes as well, earthwork, brick paving, and similar works continued.

Today, Berma has naturally taken such a form that there is not a single family before whose house a four-wheeled vehicle cannot reach. Similarly, there is now a source of drinking water for every two families. There is also a private boring for every eight bighas of land. Besides this, two branches of the Western Kosi Canal are being constructed, one running north to south and the other east to west. A state boring has also been installed, though it has not yet become operational. Transport facilities are available as well. On one side, the railway station is three kilometres away; on the other, the National Highway is two kilometres away.

Just as, with the arrival of spring, new leaves, shoots, buds, and flowers appear on everything from cloud-touching trees to the lowly earth, so too, in the garden of Berma's village society, new blossoms began to sprout. Problems of many kinds, both positive and negative, began to rise and take shape.

Jagdish Prasad Mandalji and others reflected that caste rigidity was an obstacle to the uplift of society. Of course, where storytelling and kinship relations existed between castes, the matter became one between two social groups. But untouchability between castes created a deep trench within society. Therefore, everyone agreed that a meeting should be held once a month and should move from hamlet to hamlet.

There was no question of making elaborate arrangements for the meeting. But if the people of that hamlet wished to arrange food and drink, that would be welcome, and everyone would eat together. This was the view of all. Even today, people do eat together. In wedding processions and feast-ceremonies of all castes, people eat together. Yes, bitterness certainly still remains, but when the cooperation of all castes is present, it diminishes. This

was a very good step.

In the surrounding region, it was as though a contagious stirring had spread. In Jhanjharpur block, west of the Kamala, Nagendraji, Dr. Nagendra Kumar Jha, the middle brother of Dr. Dhirendra, and east of Berma, in Phulparas block, Kamesarji, Shri Kameshwar Ram, also initiated a revolutionary current. The influence of the party grew firmly in all three blocks.

Meanwhile, Nagendraji conducted a party school. Since it was nearby, Jagdish Prasad Mandal and others took part for all three days. They had the opportunity to stay with leaders from the Centre. Those leaders too felt that something similar should be held in Berma, and that too was done.

In the meetings held from hamlet to hamlet, the problems of each hamlet remained the main issue. Because of this, more and more people began to study the village. At crossroads and gathering places, instead of talk about cinema and circus, discussions of village problems began. Yet society, like a sieve, remained diseased and full of holes.

Berma's structure, however, is different from that of other villages. One major reason is that, to this day, it has not fallen into the grip of a village-cutting stream. It is said that from very ancient times there has been a stream called Supain, whose old name was Suparna. But like a python, it has remained seated in one place. Even that stream has water only for three months of the year. For the remaining months, it becomes a cremation ground on one side and grazing land on the other.

Since Berma had a large amount of homestead land, it also had sufficient high land. As there were more middle-level farmers, the boundaries of holdings were small. But in the absence of irrigation, marua and gamhari were grown even in fenced enclosures and scrubland. High land used for vegetable cultivation, that is, land suited to the four monsoon months, depended only on rainfall. The remaining medium land, excluding the chaur, could yield two crops a year.

Some borings had already been installed, and people had also sunk hand-pumps. Vegetable cultivation gathered strength. Many families rose and stood on their own feet. Moneylending too

had almost come to an end. Because of this, some new problems arose.

Like fire smouldering under ash, village politics slowly began to gather force. The Bhagwati Sthan came forward. Along with this, something else also happened. Ordinary people did come and go to all the sacred places, the dev sthans, but inwardly they remained divided. Only the Dihwar Sthan was regarded as truly public. This becomes clearly visible in marriage, mundan, upanayan, and similar rituals.

The Dihwar Sthan of Berma had been established by the Ekhare lineage. Durga Puja broke the unity of that Ekhare agnatic family. What happened was this: among the Brahmins of the village, the Ekhare family was the largest agnatic group, divided into two hamlets, the northern tola and the southern tola.

Durga Puja is performed on both the northern and southern embankments of the large pond. The pond lies between them as a boundary. The boundary of the village, and the boundary between hamlets, remained unclear. In other villages, a road sometimes forms the boundary, sometimes a school. But that did not happen in Berma. Here, the boundary was fixed in water itself.

The leadership of the northern Durga Sthan was taken by the pramukh of Madhepur block, a resident of Berma, and by Nathuni Singh of Jagdar. The pramukh was a sister's son of the village, and so a murmur arose within the Ekhare family. Yet both men, the pramukh and Nathuni Singh, took the sacred clay for the goddess from the Ekhare family.

The Ekhare group of the southern hamlet, regarding that place as their own, began to divide into ten annas and six annas. Movement between households increased. Feasts and meals also increased. At that time, Bachnu Mishra, who had already touched the soil politically, was still facing economic inequality. He had four brothers. All four were among the strongest-bodied men of the village, men of bone and frame. But they had become entangled in litigation. Bachnu Mishra had good access within the Ekhare family of the southern hamlet. Working day and night with complete effort, he arranged for the sacred clay for the southern Durga also to be brought from the Ekhare family.

The Ekhare family became divided. The Brahmins too were divided, and therefore there was never any shortage of ritual worship or priestly service.

In the midst of this, the grandfather of Kapileshwar Raut died. The priest issued his challenge, and a struggle began. On one side, the priest began to display his authority; on the other, Kapileshwar Raut stood firm and unyielding. Within five to seven days, between the death and the shraddha, the whole area began to hum with tension. On the day of death, no dispute arose, but a new consciousness certainly awakened.

This new consciousness seized life in the form of a bond within the party. As soon as the news of death spread, people rushed in so quickly that the problem itself seemed to disappear. Someone went to buy cloth, someone cut bamboo and began making the bier, and someone went to dig the cremation pit. Work began to move like a wartime factory.

But just as a part of one company's engine, when fitted into another company's engine, keeps rattling and clattering uselessly, trouble began from the very start. Even before the bier could be made, interruption and objection began over the cutting of bamboo. The root cause of this obstruction lay in the different customs and rites of different castes.

Yet the coincidence was such that people from all hamlets reached one place. Just as, at the smell of ganja smoke, a lover raises his eyes again and again toward the beloved, so whoever loved a particular task began looking toward his own people. But on one point all agreed: in the work of a particular caste, the importance of that caste should be greater.

The householders, Kapileshwar Raut, Jageshwar Raut, and Lakhan Raut, the three brothers, had opened the treasure of Kubera. Whatever was needed for any work, there was no need even to ask. They had their own orchard and groves, and their own bamboo clump. Three bamboos were cut for the bier.

While the bier was being made, another round of objection and interruption arose over what kind of poles and planks should be used. But within the party there were leaders who were also practical householders. Therefore, through their judgement, the

bier was prepared.

Then trouble arose over the cutting of wood. There was a dry shisham tree, one that had not developed proper heartwood, and it could have served the purpose. But without understanding or considering the matter, two persons, guided only by their own impulse, cut down a fruit-bearing mango tree. What could be done then? Dry firewood was certainly needed, so the shisham too was cut. For three or four days, the Dom remained engaged in carrying wood. Be that as it may, hundreds of men sat together and witnessed the cremation ground.

Like a spreading infection, no one could say which spark would rise from where and catch hold of what. One man returned from the cremation ground. He had to go to another village, so he shaved his beard and hair and left. Usually, hair and beard are shaved on the third day. Similarly, the question of crossing the village boundary was also raised.

It was as though the whole village had been seized by infections of many colours. There was no single, straight line of discussion; everything was twisted and entangled. Someone's face was turned one way, someone's tail another. But in the field of challenge, challenge itself gains strength. Therefore, no one was ready to accept his own argument as a counter-argument or false reasoning.

Yet, just as vehicles stand one behind another on the roads of Calcutta, so many issues arose in the course of conversation that the talk itself became entangled. The discussion of one incident would merge into another.

Just as, in a war between two countries, the sleep of those who live near the border is ruined, so it became among the people of the village. On the first day, many people could not understand what had happened. On the second day, it became known that some people had brought back the axes and hatchets they had carried with them. The custom is that until the thirteenth day, everyone remains under the shadow of death impurity. Therefore, for three days, those tools too would not be used for anything.

Jagdish Prasad Mandalji asked those who had brought back their axes and hatchets, "Why did you bring them?"

They replied, “These are the axes of the Jhanjharpur party, the people who deal in wood. Today we used them for the work of society. If the axes had been left unused or rendered useless, the work itself would have stopped.”

In the meantime, one person spoke up: “Since these axes belong to another village, will death impurity touch them? Or does impurity fall only on the tools of the village? Will tools from another village also become impure?”

But the matter of the axes did not take hold as strongly as the matter of hair.

Talks of many colours began to move through the village. In the thirteenth-day shraddha, the agnates and relatives would have their nails and hair cut on the appointed day, so the household itself had no issue in that regard. But in society, one caste lived with other castes, one hamlet with another hamlet, and ideological clashes began from hamlet to hamlet, from house to house.

A strange situation arose. Just as quarrels in the village increased, so did the panchayats. With more and more panchayats, the dispute both decreased and increased.

Some said, “After burning the corpse, we bathed in the pond, came into the courtyard, touched iron and stone, returned to our own place, ate soharai or chilli, bathed again, and changed clothes. How much impurity can remain after all that, if it still clings to us?”

Others said, “Is hair-cutting meant only for the agnates, or must others also do it?”

Someone else said, “Only yesterday I paid ten rupees and had my hair cut. How can I cut it again?”

Talk continued in the village, and the next morning some people had their hair cut. Without any formal panchayat, a panchayat of sorts had already taken place: there is something attached to the hair; whoever’s mind accepts it may have it cut, and whoever’s mind does not accept it need not do so.

Two days passed in this way. On the third day, the ritual shaving and closing would take place. Until then, society as a whole had not taken any decision on what should be done. But it was settled in everyone’s mind that the situation would certainly be

faced. Whatever problem arose would be solved at that very moment.

On the day of the chhaur-jhappi ritual, the householder, Kapileshwar Raut, sent a family member to the Mahapatra. There was no Mahapatra in Berma; the one who officiated for them came from Kachhubi. Those who had no right to speak also spoke in the name of the Mahapatra and declared their decision: "We shall not go." The family member returned from Kachhubi and reported this.

The time for chhaur-jhappi was approaching. What was to be done? Bidesar Thakur, the barber, said, "I know the entire procedure of chhaur-jhappi. I shall conduct it." And that is what happened.

In shraddha rites, the Mahapatra holds even greater importance than the Brahmin priest. No decision was reached, except this much: just as the Mahapatra had been asked, the priest too should be consulted. That was done.

The next day, when the priest was asked, he too gave the same reply: he would not come. Everyone had already made up his mind.

During the afternoon, a meeting was held among themselves. A unanimous decision was taken that both the priest and the Mahapatra should be left aside. In shraddha, there are two kinds of work: the ritual rites and the feast. Whatever money would have been spent on the rituals should be spent on the feast instead. In any case, the Barais are not present in every village; they are found only in a few selected villages, and for that reason they are closely bound through kinship relations.

As soon as this decision was taken, it was as though the conch of the Mahabharata had been blown. The news spread through the surrounding cluster of villages. In other villages too, questions of many kinds began to arise. In some places, people said that if the rites were not performed, they would not eat the feast. Elsewhere, it was said that if a man performs the rites of his own father and grandfather in his own way, how does the mouth of the panch, the feast-eaters, become defiled?

Relatives began coming to Kapileshwar Rautji's house to enquire. Whoever came received the same answer: if social

convention breaks, kinship does not break. We shall eat not as society, but as kin.

In the village too, disputes arose among the castes. On the tenth day after the death, the day on which the nail and hair cutting was to take place, a meeting was held early in the morning, around eight o'clock. The meeting was held because, until then, the feast system had remained limited to khaja and moongba. The people's standard of living was so low that it reached only up to khaja-moongba or laddus. Therefore, it was decided that the food arrangements should be improved. There should be rasgulla and lalmohan, along with sufficient curd.

This condition of feasts still remains to some extent even now, but earlier some castes were especially ill-reputed in matters of feasting. A large vessel of tea was prepared. Whoever felt like drinking drank as much as he wished. Betel too was served, though betel is formally prohibited on such occasions.

By now, the entanglement of caste had been loosened. The caste members from all eleven villages agreed that they would eat the feast. A feeling rose in the atmosphere: will a man perform the death rites of his own parents, or of someone else's? Why should others, for no reason, spoil their faces and their relations with kin and family?

Seeing that the work had been straightened out so far, everyone's heart became fresh and green. On top of that, there was also the pull of tea. Not only this, rasgulla and lalmohan were already before them; everyone knew that the share of villagers and outsiders alike would be equal.

As soon as the discussion began, the three sisters, the daughters of Kapileshwar Rautji, came forward and raised a question: "We shall arrange the feast for the nail and hair-cutting day."

The question became complicated, for all three were saying, "We shall do it." Saying "All right," the three sisters were sent away. But the knot only tightened further. Once the plan for a large feast had been made, the smaller feast had to be stopped. This was not Kubera's treasure, which would increase the more one took from it.

In the nail and hair-cutting feast, who is given food? Only those who had gone to the cremation ground. And what kind of feast is it? It is a rice feast. But among all castes, the practice of eating rice together does not exist. Then what? Would it be good to have two customs for people who had performed one and the same work?

In the course of discussion, the feast on the day of nail and hair cutting was dropped. The three sisters were told that a large feast was already being arranged; whatever they wished to contribute, they should add to that. It would make things easier for the household. In the end, the three sisters agreed.

The second question arose: what would be done if the priest and the Mahapatra did not come? Some began searching for a priest of their own caste; others looked for different arrangements. In a few other castes, such arrangements had already begun, but here it did not happen. No one could be found within the caste.

Some people were of the opinion that since the priest and the Mahapatra would not come at all, they should be left out entirely. Others said that when they could see, in the village itself, that the Rams, the Sadays, the Paswans, and others had everything of their own, why should they not also create their own arrangement? What, then, should be done?

In the end, it was decided that Ramavatar Raut would be entrusted with the responsibility of worship, and Bidesar Thakur would assist him in conducting it.

Then another question arose: how should the ritual be performed?

What was necessary? If nothing else was available, the worship would be performed on banana leaves, and as dakshina the two men would each be given a pair of dhotis. That is what was done. It was decided that the feast would be held on the very day of the shraddha, the eleventh day. The feast took place and earned considerable praise. But the reaction that followed within the caste was another matter.

Until then, for all ten days, many kinds of meetings had continued, from the village to other villages. In the end, Ratish Babu of Navani gave the decision: “Caste does not move forward

without the ritual letter."

The incident at Kapileshwar Raut's house, the shraddha of his grandfather, spread from the village to the outside like a spark of fire. From this incident, many other incidents, small and large, were born. Among them, two were important: first, what happened with Ramavatar Raut, and second, what happened with Bidesar Thakur. The contribution of both men had been significant.

Madhepur was not only a block and a police-station area; it was also an Assembly constituency. It is no longer so now. At that time, it was a block and police-station area of twenty-eight panchayats, and therefore also a political centre. It lies between the Kosi and the Kamala. Thus, whatever small or large, dead or living streams flow between the Kosi in the east and the Kamala in the west pass through Madhepur block.

On one side, the Kosi has cut the land and filled it with sand; on the other, the Kamala has done the same. Somewhere there is sand, and somewhere there is fine, fertile soil. In the freedom struggle of the country, the contribution of Madhepur block was no less than that of any other block in Bihar. Jay Prakash Babu, Suraj Babu, and Lakhanji, Dr. Lakshman Jha, came and went frequently in this region. Because of this, local leadership emerged in most villages, and leadership at the anchal level emerged as well.

At the northern end of Madhepur block lies Berma panchayat, adjoining Jhanjharpur and Phulparas. Just as Berma panchayat lies at the northern end, Matras panchayat lies at the eastern end.

The family of Ramavatar Raut was a well-known family of Matras panchayat. Ramavatar Raut of Matras was a man of property, but his village was devastated by the Kosi. The panchayat falls within the western embankment of the Kosi. A stream also flows through the village itself.

After Independence in 1947, the propertied people of the area were also the mukhiyas and leading men of the villages. The political party, the Congress, stood on a class basis. Therefore, all the substantial people had inner relations with one another. By inner relations is meant that the bonds of caste among them were not weak.

Here, one question deserves thought: among themselves, that is, between one family and another, they had exchange, eating and drinking, help, and mutual assistance of every kind. Yet political division within caste had also begun to grow, and political parties drew strength from it. Like a creeper, these families, the well-settled families, were spread and arranged across the area.

Ramavatar Raut of Berma, who at that time was a young man who had passed matriculation, was a loyal worker of the Communist Party of India. He also served for one term of three years on the district council of the C.P.I.

Just as Kapileshwar Raut had three brothers, Kapileshwar, Jageshwar, and Lakhan Raut, Ramavatar Raut too had three brothers: Sitaram, Ramavatar, and Ram Prasad Raut. Two of the brothers had been married in Matras.

The Barai caste is not found in every village, but there are certain villages where it has a dense population. Just as Matras was one such village, so was Berma; even now it has nearly a hundred households. But there was also a difference between the two villages. In Matras, one family held dominance, and because of that the feudal thread remained stronger there. This was not the case in Berma. Berma consisted largely of families of limited means and lower-middle households, and therefore the thinking of the two villages also differed.

Moreover, the Communist Party had existed in Berma in one form or another since 1962. Even before that, however, litigation and disputes had taken hold of the village. Struggles were already going on against landlords, whether Baldev Babu, Baldev Jha of Sarisab Pahi, or Lakshmikant and Ramakant Sahu of Jhanjharpur. It had not yet taken the form of a full movement, but at the individual level resistance certainly existed, and because of that there were people who could speak openly.

A political case had arisen in 1962, but after some time it subsided. The party people, however, were implicated in an arson case and punished.

Ramavatar Raut, the mukhiya of Matras, then attacked Ramavatar Raut of Berma. The attack took a social form. The two brothers, Sitaram Raut and Ramavatar Raut, had both married in

Matras. Sitaram Raut's father-in-law belonged to an ordinary family, while Ramavatar Raut's father-in-law, having no son, had become almost like a wandering ascetic. The Ramavatar of Matras placed feudal pressure upon both families and ordered them to take their daughters back. Both men became helpless.

Ramavatar's father-in-law said plainly, "It is your village. Do whatever comes to your mind. I am leaving." And he became a wandering babaji.

Even so, Ramavatar Raut came to Berma with his supporters and followers. Vindhyanath Thakur, the pramukh of Berma, was already prepared with his own people. At the same time, within the caste itself, among the Barais, a hard barrier of division had already been raised: eating and drinking together had been stopped.

A difficult situation arose. It was difficult because caste and sect had become so rigid that breaking them was no easy matter. And if one tried to stop the conflict, how could it be stopped? The moment any struggle emerged, it immediately turned into a caste issue.

Around noon, Ramavatar Raut reached Berma. Vindhyanath Thakur was already alert and prepared. The people of the hamlet, the Barai tola of the village, came forward. Around the house of Ramavatar Raut of Berma, men and women gathered in crowds and raised an uproar.

Ramavatar's father, Subadh Raut, sat at the doorway with his wife and three sons, his back turned toward the ancestral homestead, like a goat invited only for slaughter. Each person looked into the other's face. The heart itself seemed to ask: Mother, how long will you endure? Father, how long will you endure? Son, how long will you endure? Child, how long will you endure?

Both daughters-in-law, Ramavatar's wife and his elder brother's wife, sat weeping against the posts of the kitchen veranda. They were told:

"Take whatever ornaments and jewellery you have."

Neither woman spoke a word. The women of the hamlet caught them by the arms, dragged them out of the courtyard, and forcibly took them across the boundary.

Along with this came a second blow. Ramavatar Raut had about four bighas of land. Because of zamindari entanglements and old claims, a case was raised over nearly eighty per cent of that land.

Others took responsibility for all the court arrangements. But land requires both evidence and possession. The person in possession certainly has one advantage: he gets the chance to cultivate and reap the produce. The dispute over evidence arose in court, but the strength of society was firm, and therefore possession remained with Ramavatar. Later, the evidence too was established through the court.

About a year and a half or two years later, Ramavatar Raut of Matras reached a compromise. The main reason behind the compromise was that Subadh Raut stood firm and declared that first he would marry off his own daughter, and then he would show them. By "show them," he meant that he would break caste boundaries and begin kinship relations with another caste.

Seeing the matter move from bad to worse, everyone grew anxious. One reason for that anxiety was that lathis had already been raised several times. A test of strength had already taken place. But the real test came later, after the assassination of Indira Gandhi.

After the compromise, both girls returned from Matras to Berma, but they had become afflicted with mental illness. After one child, the elder one, Sitaram's wife, died; and after two children, the middle one, Ramavatar's wife, also died. Later, both brothers married again, and those families continue even now.

From the Durga Puja episode to the incident at Kapileshwar Raut's house, Bidesar Thakur's contribution was significant. Though he belonged to a labouring family, Bidesar Thakur had a good way of grasping a matter and of understanding and explaining things to others. His family was not very large, but it was not small either. Poverty too is a major reason for the breaking up of joint families. There is no shortage of families in society about which people say, "This whole tola of a hundred households belongs to so-and-so's lineage."

But now matters have become so tangled that not only has

property gone, there is not even a single member left who has not, at one time or another, gone to jail and broken the dignity of the lineage.

From three generations above, Bidesar Thakur's family had remained a single-lineage household; therefore neither the ancestral land nor the jajmani work had been divided. The same continued down to the grandson's generation. Bidesar Thakur had one son and four daughters. He owned eight kathas of land, of which three kathas were paddy land, one and a half or two kathas were homestead land, and the remaining land, on the embankment of the large pond, was used for trees and orchard growth. He also cultivated ten kathas of paddy land on sharecropping.

In the village jajmani system, nearly one-fourth of the village fell to his share. The method of earning from it took many forms. Yet most of his clients, those who had their beards and hair cut, paid his dues on time in Aghan. The full annual earning from one adult, including beard and hair, was one dhar, that is, twelve seers of raw grain, roughly seven kilograms. Half the amount was earned for hair-cutting alone.

In his lifetime, he saw all four daughters and sons-in-law, grandsons and granddaughters through them, as well as his son, daughter-in-law, grandson, and granddaughter.

Once, Bidesar Thakur was with Jagdish Prasad Mandal in Chakia Jail, Madhubani. About ten other men from the village were also there. Bidesar Thakur would go to one side and smoke ganja.

While he was smoking, the jail jamadar saw him. He caught him and put him in danda-beri, the wooden restraint and fetters. What could be done in such a situation? Be that as it may, there was also a companion from western Madhubani, a forceful and outspoken man.

At night, after eating and drinking, they would hold a cultural programme for an hour or an hour and a half. Wearing the danda-beri, Bidesar Thakur too sang a song of his own making:

"Who is as foolish as I am?

With wife and children, I reared buffaloes.

The pramukh, Nathuni Singh, the daroga,
Came to the cattle-post and untied them.
Who is like me?

The moment I entered the jail,
Under the peepal tree I rolled ganja.
The jamadar came
And fastened danda-beri upon me.
Who is like me?

In sun and sweat I cultivated the fields,
Tulsi flowers and Kanakjir rice.
From under the thatch, Sarup Singh
Weighed it at one and a half.
Who is like me?

And more than that,
They had long ago snatched away
The poet-cuckoo, Mahakavi Vidyapati.
Who is like me?"

Singing, he narrated his own account. The companion from western Madhubani was deeply moved. He called Bidesar Thakur near him, spoke of his own life, and listened to Bidesar Thakur's story as well. Early the next morning, he spoke to the jamadar, had the danda-beri removed, and declared him a "poet." The jail staff began calling Bidesar "Kaviji," but only inside the jail, not outside.

Bidesar Thakur was a fine performer of the Manchobhiya dance. He had such a gift that, to the tune of film songs as well as social songs, he could compose and sing two or four lines of his own.

Bidesar Thakur's death was tragic. While plucking mangoes, he fell from a tree and his backbone was crushed. Treatment was

certainly given, but this was not like a broken wrist or a broken ankle that could heal cleanly and well. Yet after lying in bed for a year, he rose and stood again. He opened a saloon at the chowk. From that, he began earning fifteen or twenty rupees in cash, while also managing his jajmani work.

Jagdish Prasad Mandal had just risen from sleep when he heard that Bidesar Thakur had died. Only the previous evening they had spoken together. Therefore, he could not believe it. Yet such news is not usually false. Abuse too has its limit only while a person lives; death is a curse.

Seeing Bidesar Thakur's story, the well-dressed, ornamented figure of feudal power began to dance before Jagdish Prasad Mandal's eyes.

Leaving aside a few families, not of any particular caste but of special property, most families continued to work and struggle according to the needs of their lives. Bidesar Thakur's wife bought a buffalo calf and raised it into a milch buffalo. It was a good animal, a fine one, and there was also a bullock.

The police daroga came with constables and the chowkidar. Nathuni Singh came with his lathaits, and Vindhyanath Thakur too arrived with his own messengers and followers at Bidesar Thakur's place. Since the house stood by the roadside, people began to gather in a crowd. The three men, Nathuni Singh, Vindhyanath Thakur, and the daroga, whispered among themselves and had the buffalo untied and taken away.

After it was taken, what was to happen? Was it something to be returned, or something to be made one's own? What could the daroga really take away merely by speaking? However loose the law may be, the court still requires papers. Vindhyanath Thakur did not have the courage to carry the matter through. His messengers and followers shook their heads. Even among ruffians, caste divisions remained.

In the end, Nathuni Singh took the buffalo to his own place. Bidesar Thakur went around the village telling people what had happened. But what remedy was there except to shed tears? Whenever Bidesar Thakur came among the others, among ten or twelve men, he seemed ready to give his life. There is a kind of

excitement even in fighting; otherwise why would people risk their lives merely for the thrill of it? Some people are simply like that, and so one kind of thinking began to spread.

The problem of one panchayat had now reached another panchayat. Therefore, it was no longer the problem of one panchayat alone, but of two. Yet the root question remained this: should a human life be lost for the sake of one buffalo? A man may raise an entire herd of buffaloes, but can a thousand herds create even one human being?

For the moment, the atmosphere softened. But just as poison too grows in the root of turmeric, because turmeric claims to cut poison, so after a few days Bidesar Thakur gathered everyone and said:

"Most of the people who untied and took away my buffalo are my own jajmans. I shall stop cutting their hair and shaving their beards. My earnings may disappear, but I shall make them wander about like unkempt men. And how will my earnings disappear? If I do not work, what earnings will I collect anyway?"

The question then arose: if a man stands up for the solution of his own problem, what is to be done? Before everyone, Bidesar Thakur took a vow that he would no longer cut their hair. News of this spread as though it had flown into the sky. No one had the courage to force him.

The condition of the region was varied, and therefore the struggles too took many forms. In the land struggle, Nagendraji, Dr. Nagendra Jha of Paithghat, had been hung upside down at the police station and beaten with hundreds of lathi blows until his body was torn. Because of this, his hands and feet remained bent throughout his life. Kamesar Ram of Phulparas, along with twenty-five or thirty others, spent three years in jail after being implicated in a murder case. Similarly, Ram Prasad Sahni of Pachahi had been tied upside down to a truck and dragged along the road.

Until then, in Berma village, no lawsuit had ever been answered with another lawsuit. That changed with the buffalo incident. A case was filed against all three men: the daroga, Nathuni Singh, and Vindhyanath Thakur. By then, dozens of cases had already taken place. Seeing the one-sided conduct of the police

station, everyone decided that they would neither go there to file cases nor appear there in connection with any case. Whatever had to happen would happen through the court.

The case was filed in court. The recovery of the buffalo was ordered by the High Court. Virendraji, Honourable Justice of the High Court at Patna, worked on the matter.

In the panchayat concerning Bidesar Thakur's hair-cutting dispute, the pramukhji's representative was Bouku Thakur, a barber. Bidesar Thakur would represent himself; ten men from society would sit and listen. Pramukhji too would keep his own listeners. But only the two panchs would speak. That was the decision.

The panchayat carried a strange attraction. One reason for this was that Bidesar Thakur, even when alone, could often overturn the entire situation. Because of this, he had become notorious. The second attraction of the panchayat was Bouku Thakur's language.

"That was the first day in my life when I encountered such language," Jagdish Prasad Mandal recalls.

On one side, Bouku Thakur spoke in an ornate style. One line would go in favour of pramukhji and against Bidesar Thakur; the very next line would favour Bidesar and oppose pramukhji. The listeners became trapped in the net of language itself, in the web of words. Bidesar Thakur's supporters and pramukhji's supporters alike became entangled in Bouku Thakur's speech. What could such a panchayat become except a buzzing confusion?

Between two opposing sides, unless someone becomes truly even-sighted and drives the nail fully into all sixteen annas, how will its sound descend to the depths below? Unless, from that sound, a form rises upward from the earth toward the sky, how will sound after sound become complete understanding?

Many more panchayats were held, but neither compromise nor settlement emerged. Meanwhile, all the agnates, together with Bidesar Thakur, sat within their own barber society and once again divided the households of their jajmans among themselves. But the panchayat itself remained postponed. ❑

LIFE WITHOUT A DIARY

☰

In a life without a diary, dates become only rough outlines of events; the exact day and month do not remain. Meanwhile, a district conference was held at Laukahi. It had been organized at Laukahi High School. Owing to the lack of transport from Laukaha station, Jagdish Prasad Mandal and the others, except for a few, went on foot. The reason for the lack of transport was the condition of the road. There was one jeep, but how many people could go in it? The district office went with the official papers.

Bhogendraji too was present. The conference lasted four days. There was a good gathering, with comrades from across the district, each bringing the ways and manners of his own area.

On the second day of the conference, the two representatives, Jagdish Prasad Mandal and Ramavatar Raut, met Bhogendraji. He was alone in a small room, lying awake on a bed spread over a cemented platform, covered with a four-hand-long gamchha. As soon as the two reached, he sat up and asked:

“How are things in the village and at home?”

Bhogendraji had a remarkable quality: he would grasp any matter from its root. The incident of the shraddha at Kapileshwar Raut’s house had already taken place, and Ramavatar told him of it in a single line. But Bhogendraji himself had recently gone through the same ritual; he too had had his hair cut. He had experienced how society had examined him, bound him, and carried him across. The daughters too had raised their questions. Ramavatar narrated the entire incident in detail, and Bhogendraji fell silent.

After some time, breaking that silence, he spoke of his own experience. Ramavatar Rautji had become a new kind of priest, and Bhogendraji seemed to accept this. Repeating the question, Ramavatar asked:

"Comrade, how do you see what happened in our place?"

Bhogendraji replied:

"Just as one may touch the nose directly, and one may also touch it by taking the hand around, usury and moneylending are the direct touch; what happened here is the same touch made by taking the hand around. Therefore, look at it in its social and economic form. Within society, an economic structure has arisen whose equation must now be worked out. But who will do it?"

Having said this, he fell silent. Just then, the former MLA Lal Bihari arrived. Understanding that conference work was at hand, the two came out.

After the Madhepur district conference, Jagdish Prasad Mandalji entered the district leadership and began giving time to the area. Village after village was entangled, each with its own issue and its own struggle. Somewhere the issue was the fish trade; somewhere it was the dominance of local strongmen. In some places, the land question had not even been touched, and the same was true of moneylending. The struggles were different from the issues listed in the programme of the district conference.

Sharecropping began on the land of Lakshmikant and Ramakant Sahu. He himself knew, and the people of Berma too knew, whether he cultivated the land himself or whether sharecroppers did it. As soon as sharecropping began, eight or ten houses, like the houses of pond-bed settlers, were built on cremation-ground fallow land. And when Jagdish Prasad Mandal and the others moved toward the fields, those people set fire to their own houses and implicated twenty-eight people in an arson case. The reason for building eight or ten houses was to make the case serious; there would be an issue and there would be witnesses.

In the meantime, another incident took place. Kisun Dev Mandal ran a tea shop. He too was a militant party worker.

Kisun Mandal's tea shop also served as the meeting place of

Jagdish Prasad Mandal and the others. Jagdish Prasad Mandal and four or five companions were sitting there when more than fifty Sadays, that is, Musahars, arrived carrying spades in their hands. Standing before the tea shop, they began speaking aggressively from every side. Jagdish Prasad Mandal and the others stood up and began answering them. The Sadays had weapons in their hands, and on top of that they had drunk tari and liquor and were acting under someone else's prompting.

Meanwhile, a rumour spread toward the village that a violent confrontation was taking place at Kisun Dev's shop.

No sooner was the rumour heard than whoever was wherever he happened to be ran there with a lathi in hand. Between the hamlet and the shop, a fight broke out. It was a fierce clash. Several heads were split open, and ears were torn. The fear of cases, criminal proceedings, and jail had disappeared.

Within thirty-one days, all twenty-eight accused obtained bail. After the bail, possession and counter-possession over the land began.

A complication had arisen: those who were the real sharecroppers did not file the case, while those who were not sharecroppers did. The village was clearly divided into two camps. From the outside, it appeared to be only two parties, but secretly a third party had also formed. This third group did not come openly to the front; instead, it remained engaged day and night in whispering from behind.

At the very first blow, the zamindar understood that the land would eventually be lost. Being a trader by temperament, he quietly began selling the land from underneath. There were, of course, some old laws relating to land, and some new ones too had come into existence, such as the land-ceiling laws. In some matters, however, there were no clear laws at all.

Thirty or forty years earlier, the struggle over bakast land had already taken place. That struggle, however, had been completed with relative ease. Among the people too, the value of rights had remained alive. Some individuals, fighting cases on their own, had taken possession of land even without formal rights. The legal entanglement surrounding land had not become extremely

deep, but it had certainly taken hold.

The anti-British direction of the freedom movement before 1935 had already suffered a shock. Leftist thought had established its own identity, and the Communist Party too had been formed in 1925. Subhas Babu had also placed his own viewpoint before the country.

The entanglement over land was this: under the sharecropping law, khatiyans had already been prepared in the previous survey by recording sikmi batai. The Bhoodan movement too had already emerged. Alongside sharecropping, the land-ceiling law had also been framed, according to which land above twenty bighas would be taken over.

Even then, in western Madhubani district, the struggle over sharecropping continued with great intensity. And it was not only the zamindars. Those with larger holdings, their dependants and hangers-on, and even some political parties had, in the name of caste and community, created political formations of their own.

On one side, feudal संस्कार had been imposed upon the poor and had dragged them downward; on the other, within society, the Communist Party had been turned into an object of hatred by being portrayed as hostile to caste and religion. Because of this, whenever a party worker arrived at someone's doorway, a strange atmosphere would arise.

It was the good fortune of Madhubani and Darbhanga districts that the Communist Party there had been built under the leadership of the very caste that had long functioned as the regulator of society. Within the Communist Party, Brahmin leadership was substantial. Yet the Communist Party reached all castes. This became especially necessary after Khajauli became a reserved constituency.

Before 1955, the influence of caste in Bihar politics had been limited, but afterward it began to grow stronger. Because of this, a class character did not develop; instead, a caste character deepened. Caste became divided against caste. Yet the fruit of Independence had at least given everyone the right to vote.

Within government, the throwing about of chairs had begun after 1962. MLAs and MPs began changing sides. The common

people continued to be deceived, again and again, until even a villager owning twenty bighas of land had to sell land for his daughter's marriage.

The development of the region did not merely stop; it began to move backward. The Western Kosi Canal, the Maithili language, and the question of land remained the principal issues of the Communist Party throughout.

On one side there was a movement demanding the Kosi canal; on the other, there was a movement opposing it.

The Bhoodan movement, after distorting its own purpose, became a centre of money-making, and this made matters even more entangled. The confusion lay in this: land certificates for the same plot were issued to three different persons. As a result, disputes among the original landholders became trapped among those who had received the land. The administrative situation appeared entirely one-sided.

Those in Berma who opposed the Communists heaved a long sigh of relief. Just as jackals beat drums at dusk and dance when a stubborn young buffalo dies, so the anti-Communists, breathing freely again, began to dance. Looting and grabbing gained strength. Theft of produce from the fields, vegetables, grain, and fruit increased in the village.

Even before this, the village had been so afflicted by theft that it had become a serious problem. In brief, theft decreased only after one man was tied to a tree and another received a collective beating. Yet, though the form of theft changed, thieves did not disappear. When forms change, people are still cheated, whether through false gold or the promise of one becoming three.

As soon as the land struggle arose, each person cast his line from wherever he stood. Lakshmikant and Ramakant of Jhanjharpur were two brothers. One brother's share was taken by Krishna Chandra Jha, Kailu Master, and the other by Baijnath Mandal. The Communist Party had got Mahadev Mandal to file a sharecropping case.

Jagdish Prasad Mandal and the others went a day earlier with all twenty-eight accused and twenty-eight witnesses to obtain bail. Some went by bicycle, but left the bicycles aside, thinking that if

they had to go inside, the bicycles would be seized. Once a man goes to the police station, his fate becomes that of a habitual court-goer.

On the first day, after they had left the village, Baijnath Mandal raised an alarm. Holding an envelope and a letter in the village, he claimed that Kailu Master's son had written and sent abuses against his mother and sister. Even now, Jagdish Prasad Mandalji has not had the chance to see that letter. In truth, both men had an inner desire that the whole sixteen annas should belong to them alone. One was looking for a way to get it through pressure; the other was bent on taking possession by force.

Jagdish Prasad Mandal and the others stopped Mahadev Mandal's sharecropping. The reason was that Mahadev Mandal was Baijnath Mandal's elder brother. Was it not for that very family that the land had been purchased?

After getting bail in the arson case and returning to the village, a few people said, "Baijnath Mandal has beaten Kailu Master's son and is holding him at his doorway."

After a short while, Kailu Master Sahib's sister came to Jagdish Prasad Mandal. She is still alive and has undergone an operation on her spine. Whether that affected her mind or not is another matter, but if she is well, this may be confirmed from her. She came and said, "Baijnath has beaten my nephew and is keeping him in custody. Please tell him to release him."

Jagdish Prasad Mandalji went and spoke to Baijnath, and Baijnath released the boy.

That incident became a case under Section 307. Kailu Master made all three brothers, along with Mahadev Mandal, Jagdish Prasad Mandal, Ramavatar Raut, and Sat Narayan Raut, accused in the case. All of them were convicted, but the case was later settled in the High Court. Virendraji, Justice of the Patna High Court, worked on the matter.

The incident involving Kailu Master Sahib had its greatest effect upon the Durga Sthan. In the first group, Kailu Master Sahib, Ramavatar Raut, and Jagdish Prasad Mandal would go together to collect donations and manage the affairs of the Durga Sthan. It is another matter that Kailu Master would say to his Bhagwati,

"Pierce the enemy with your spear," and Jagdish Prasad Mandal too would say the same thing to his own Bhagwati. After fifteen years, Kailu Master, Jagdish Prasad Mandal, and Ramavatar Raut handed matters over to the next generation after giving them proper guidance.

The land of Lakshmikant was sold away at one-fourth to half its value. Of course, some of it went here and there. As the saying goes, "In a loot, even the spinning wheel makes a profit." One man worked as a munshi in the registry office and had obtained a copy of the land-ceiling records. As soon as he heard of a sale, he would object and quietly extract his own gain.

The village land came into the hands of the villagers. The cases and lawsuits were settled in full.

After the struggle over Lakshmikant Sahu's land, no zamindar remained in Berma in the form of a movement, nor did any such struggle arise again. Other zamindars had already sold their land and gone away. Only Lakshmikant and Ramakant had remained. That too came to an end. ❑

THE BHOODAN MOVEMENT AND THE QUESTION OF LAND

☰

In Berma, the Bhoodan movement took place only in a limited and uneven manner. The main reason was that, when land was being donated under Bhoodan, there were hardly any large landholders in Berma. There was one family, that of Gathari Jha. Gathari Jha had received land as lakheraj brahmottar in recognition of his scholarship and priestly learning, but that land was not in Berma village. It lay outside the village.

Berma was, in fact, a village of landlords and proprietors. For this reason, very little land was donated under Bhoodan. Even that land had been sold and transferred before it could be distributed. In addition, the responsibility for land records and distribution was given to workers who made the matter even more obscure. For the same plot of land, records were issued to three different people from the district office.

The movement had been intended to uplift weaker sections of society, but the confusion over records meant that no one received any real benefit. Even if a small amount of land came here and there, it could hardly solve the problem. Berma did not gain any substantial benefit from the Bhoodan movement, though the problem of homestead land for settlement was certainly resolved. This was because, on one side, there was common land; on another, there was the land of Lakshmikant; and third, one man, Gangaram or Bhola Ram Mandal, belonged to the ganj side, and his land was also taken away. Besides this, some people had their own land, and

a few others purchased land.

In the midst of the struggle over the land of Lakshmikant and Ramakant, another dispute arose. A small issue grew into a major conflict. It happened in this way. There was a man named Satdev Jha in Berma. In his youth, he had initially been of a criminal disposition. After crossing the age of forty, he left the village and went to Calcutta. At first, he worked as a porter. After some years, he found work connected with the chimney of a battery factory owned by the American company Eveready. Since it was a foreign company, he received a good salary. When he retired and returned to the village, he became involved with the Communist Party and raised a major dispute.

What happened was that Satdev Jha had no son. He had only one daughter. Because of poverty, he married her to a man much older than she was. After two children were born, the son-in-law died. Satdev Jha's own family was small, so he brought both grandsons and his daughter to his own place, that is, to Berma village. After retirement, he and his wife also returned from Calcutta to the village.

After returning, he bought five bighas of land. He installed a boring and bought a pump-set. He began arranging things in such a way that, had they been managed properly, a good farming household could have been established. But that did not happen. Along with arranging the fields, he bought a pair of bullocks and built a house. The house may not have been very fine, but it was certainly strong.

One reason for disagreement among the villagers was that, instead of remaining on his ancestral homestead, he bought another homestead and built a house elsewhere. The land on which he built the house had already been sold. Another person had bought it, but the registration had not been completed. Satdev Jha got the registration done, obtained possession of the land, and built his house on it. But in the mind of society, the feeling had already taken root that this was improper.

The first purchaser stepped back. Satdev Jha, who had spent his life in a city like Calcutta, could not manage farming. Both his grandsons were still children. The earnings from his earlier life in

Calcutta were exhausted. Yet his habits of eating and drinking, as well as his way of life, had become expensive. He began selling land. He also arranged the marriage of his elder grandson. When more than half the land had been sold, his daughter and both grandsons began quarrelling with him.

The quarrel between Satdev Jha and his daughter and grandsons began for this reason: "When we have left our own place, the daughter's in-laws' home and the grandsons' village, and come here, and if all the land here too is going to be sold, what will become of us? You two are old; in two or four years you will die. But where shall we go?"

Though the thought was justified, it was a family matter, and therefore others did not wish to interfere in it. But because of the quarrel with his daughter and grandsons, Satdev Jha became distant from them and drew closer to the opponents, the anti-Communists. His grandson, Pramod Jha, went to his in-laws' place. His in-laws' village was Bhoj-Paror in Rahika block. In that region, the land struggle was raging fiercely.

Reaching his in-laws' home, Pramod Jha told his father-in-law everything. His father-in-law came with him to Berma. Pramod Jha's father-in-law used to smoke ganja, and he still does. He came to Berma and stayed for three or four days. He formed a circle of ganja smokers. Some people from the Communist Party also became friendly with him. They ate and drank well and prepared the ground thoroughly: wherever Satdev Jha was found that day, they would catch him and take his thumb impression.

Jagdish Prasad Mandal and the others knew nothing of this. It was a plan among five or seven persons. And that is what happened. They caught him in the fields and, the five of them together, took his thumb impression on stamped paper.

The opponents, the anti-Communists, found their opportunity. Each played his own move. They made Jagdish Prasad Mandal and others accused and filed a case against them. They had no ordinary connection with the police station; the police were openly with the opponents. Whenever a case was filed, they would appear in court and secure bail. Only in one case, under Section 307, something different happened. While one of the accused was

still appearing and trying to obtain bail, the police secured an order for seizure and attachment, came to the village, and carried it out. They removed the door of the house and seized the pump-set.

The matter moved away from the party movement and turned in another direction.

Satdev Jha had eleven kathas of land amid the cluster of Jagdar. On Nathuni Singh's advice, that land was sold through someone from Jagdar itself. There was paddy in the field, and a dispute arose over harvesting it. A confrontation took place between Berma and Jagdar. That very day, Nathuni Singh withdrew with his men. But inwardly, the tension continued to rise.

There was, in fact, another reason for the distance from Jagdar. In the fifth decade, a man from Jagdar came to Berma. A dog followed him. A fight broke out between that dog and the dogs of the village. Abuses from both sides fell upon the owner of the dog. Words led to more words.

At that time, because of poverty, the labourers of Berma worked in Jagdar and also borrowed grain and money there. As soon as the quarrel grew, a noisy group from Jagdar reached Berma. A properly planned fight is one thing, but an unplanned fight falls upon the very throat. The cry of Berma versus Jagdar rose. The people of Jagdar were beaten and returned to their village.

But then the question of landlord and labourer arose. If the very man from whom one has borrowed rupees and paddy strikes one on the head with a heavy lathi, how can anyone tolerate it? A strong fire began to rise, though it later cooled.

Meanwhile, another incident occurred. A dispute arose between the mahant of Chanaura and the Darbhanga mahant. Nathuni Singh of Jagdar was the right-hand man of the Chanaura mahant. After consultation, they made a plan to fight in Darbhanga. They went there too. Within the bounds of law, trouble was bound to exist. Along with the mahant went Nathuni Singh, and with Nathuni Singh went all the ruffians of Jagdar and Berma. They all received a full beating and went to jail as well. But the matter did not end there. Even inside the jail, they were thrashed in the same way.

In 1978, the panchayat election was held. Jagdish Prasad

Mandalji faced a direct contest. There were only two candidates. Everyone in the village understood the shape of majority and minority. A small example may be given.

When the opponents became thoroughly entangled, a panchayat settlement was also accepted through the mediation of Bhogendraji. But the dispute would get caught even among the panchs. In the end, it was decided that neither would any outside panch of the Communist Party come, nor would any outside panch of Pramukhji, Vindhyanath Thakur, come. Yet the panchayat remained postponed. When everyone gave up, it was decided that the panchs would be from the village itself. One condition was imposed: whoever was not connected with either side would become a panch. When the list was examined, not a single person remained. Those who did remain were the kind who, like Bhim, would stand with Abhimanyu.

Before the panchayat election, in 1977, governments changed both in Delhi and in Patna. A new situation arose in the country. The Communist Party of Berma had already fought many struggles. Because of that, it had understood both virtues and shortcomings. Naturally, everyone had fourfold enthusiasm.

Not a single ugly act of the crumbling feudal order was left out in the panchayat election. One example may be given: in the matter of majority and minority, even names would be changed. Just as somewhere the word rakshas once meant one who protects, and sur meant one who drinks sura, the meaning of words would be turned around in practice. Someone would be called a rakshas precisely because he had done the work; alone, he had carried a corpse on his back to the cremation ground.

Against the declaration of the election, the matters of both the mukhiya and the sarpanch reached the court. The sarpanch matter was settled in the lower court itself. The mukhiya election matter reached the High Court. The election was declared invalid. Just as a Thakur's wedding party may consist only of Thakurs, so, without a functioning panchayat, all became mukhiyas in name.

The work of the mukhiya and the sarpanch also remained of the same kind: only village panchayats. With the coming of the sarpanch, that too changed. Some cracks, however, developed

within the party. The crack was this: against the very person who had been made the party's candidate for sarpanch, another nomination was filed. The party withdrew its decision and fought the election.

There was uneasiness in the atmosphere of the village. Berma was also a village of skilled criminals. One group had already spent six years in jail. They too are still alive. In that panchayat election, some people sat at the booth with lathis in their hands, and some roamed through the village. Because of the tense situation, the election passed peacefully. But at the time of counting, one man, the counting agent of the pramukh, swallowed ten or twelve stamped ballot papers in great haste. Just then, the party agent saw him and, in equal haste, struck him five or seven times across the mouth. As soon as the slaps landed, he spat them out.

One man who had spent six years in jail was caught stealing a goat. The goat belonged to Shivlal Mahato. The thief was caught with the stolen animal, and a beating began. He was beaten enough to make him confess, and the matter was settled. Along with that, he was caught and taken to the police station. The same happened with another man, another criminal. Of course, small disputes and petty disturbances continued, but they decreased.

The book containing the rules and procedures of the panchayat was also of that very kind. In the Lok Sabha, Bhogendraji's proposal was accepted. Gandhiji's imagination and the republican ideal of Magadh existed in the world of ideas, not on practical ground.

In the meantime, in 1977, Jagdish Prasad Mandalji met a friend. He was the late Kali Kant Jha, I.P.S.

Just east of Berma lies the village of Kachhubi. Kali Babu belonged to Kachhubi itself. He was an I.P.S. officer of the 1969 batch. He had come to the village and had some work in Jhanjharpur bazaar. Between Berma and Kachhubi, from the narrow field paths along the embankments to the pucca road, there were several routes. His house lay directly east of Jagdish Prasad Mandalji's house.

Kali Kant Jha was going alone on foot to Jhanjharpur, and

therefore kept moving ahead by looking for the straight path. When he came near the Musahari of Berma, the road appeared to divide in two directions. Both paths, however, went round and met ahead, from where the road to Jhanjharpur became straight. Just beside the Musahari stood the village Dihwar Sthan. Since it was a sacred place, people came and went from all sides, and therefore there were paths all around it.

When Kali Babu reached that point and looked ahead, the straight path seemed to turn westward. The Dihwar Sthan lies on the eastern side, close to Jagdish Prasad Mandal's house. He moved ahead by that path and came straight to his doorway.

By face, of course, Jagdish Prasad Mandalji knew him. But they had never had the opportunity to study in the same school. The reason was that, in the beginning, Kali Kant Jhaji studied in the village for some time and then enrolled in Navani school, whereas Jagdish Prasad Mandalji passed from his own village school and enrolled in the primary school at Kachhubi. Now the middle school has been joined with it, but in those days the middle school was separate. All arrangements were separate.

After passing Madhyama, when Kali Kant Jha had acquired a firm grounding in Sanskrit reading and writing, his father felt satisfied. Later, he enrolled in the tenth class at Tamuria High School. In those days, admission up to the tenth standard was possible even without certificates. The syllabus of the tenth and eleventh standards was mixed. After a year, the tenth-standard examination was held, and it was conducted in the school itself. Hardly any students failed, much as is still the case in many other countries.

Between the tenth and eleventh standards, there was also a system of assessment. The assessment carried two hundred marks. Because of this, in the matriculation board examination, each subject carried only eighty marks. The assessment marks were sent by the school itself and were added to the board, that is, the matriculation result.

But one thing certainly existed within this system: a student passed if he secured twenty-two marks. Within that too, there was another point: in Social Studies, one could pass with ten marks.

This does not mean that ten marks were easy. Most students remained within twenty marks; only a few went beyond that.

Kali Babu enrolled in the Arts faculty. But within a year, that is, by the time of the tenth-standard examination, he became a subject of discussion not only in his own school but in other schools as well. The reason was that, until then, from the eighth standard up to the board examination, the results of science students had remained ahead in high school. In the tenth standard, he stood first.

In the Arts subjects, however, there was a setback. The setback was that the practice of awarding marks in examinations until then was of a different kind. Marks in the Arts subjects moved forward slowly, almost crawling, whereas in science subjects a student could obtain one hundred out of one hundred.

To give a small example, when the matter of high school came up in conversation, he said:

"When I would leave for school after eating, I would write five English words, or the answer to one question, on the palm of my hand, and by the time I reached school I would memorise it. I used to do the same while going and returning. As soon as I reached school, I would first go to the water point and wash my hand properly, and then sit down. Of course, there is also some difference in the system of education. The habit of memorisation exists in every form."

Kali Kant Jha passed the matriculation examination in the first division. The condition of his family, however, was neither very good nor very bad, because he belonged to a Mahapatra family. That tradition was spread almost like a zamindari. Moreover, since the Mahapatras were fewer in number, their field of work remained wide even then. At that time, C.M. College was regarded as a very good college, and good students were admitted there.

In 1959, four colleges were opened, among them Janta College at Jhanjharpur and Sarisab College. After passing matriculation, he did not go to C.M. College. R.K. College too was good, of course, but there was some difference in the practical functioning of the two. Where R.K. College had room for everyone, C.M. College did not. There was another reason as well:

C.M. College had already become a government college, and the limit for student admission had been fixed.

Though he wished to study at C.M. College, Kali Babu enrolled at Sarisab College. The reason was that, in exchange for teaching two students at one place, arrangements were made for his lodging and food. The family income was not so poor that he could not have gone to C.M. College, but support was lacking. He passed I.A. in the first division with English Literature. He then felt the need to stay in Darbhanga. He enrolled at C.M. College with English Honours and came out as an Honours graduate.

At the time when Jagdish Prasad Mandalji was studying at Janta College, Honours teaching was not available there. Only in Maithili were there three teachers, and therefore Honours was possible in Maithili.

Jagdish Prasad Mandal was a student of Hindi and Political Science. He prepared privately for Hindi Honours. There were, of course, two teachers in the college, but teaching did not actually take place. He filled in his B.A. examination form through Janta College itself, and his examination was held at C.M. College.

Taking the western path by the Dihwar Sthan, Kali Kant Jha arrived at Jagdish Prasad Mandal's doorway. Jagdish Prasad Mandal considered it his good fortune that an I.P.S. officer had come to his door. He stopped him and seated him at the doorway. When asked, Kali Babu said, "I am going to Jhanjharpur. I have some work there."

Jagdish Prasad Mandal said, "You are alone, and that too on foot. It will be troublesome."

He replied, "There will be no difficulty."

Jagdish Prasad Mandal then said, "I too shall come along. We shall also get a chance to talk."

But Kali Babu had the eye of a police officer. He said, "Give me a bicycle; I shall return it on my way back."

Kali Babu went to Jhanjharpur by bicycle.

This is how the first meeting between the two took place. On that day, there was no sense that the relationship would become so deep and would last throughout life. This could not be imagined

because many old well-wishers and acquaintances had already broken away. Of course, new ones also grew.

One example may be given. He had a companion from his own village who had studied with him in college. But that man was enclosed within the boundary of caste. He got a job in the State Bank, with a good salary and abundant income. His thinking changed so much that when he came to the village, he did not meet Jagdish Prasad Mandal. Unfortunately, after ten or twelve years, he was injured in a scooter accident and returned to the village. After a few days, he died.

Even now, Jagdish Prasad Mandalji feels sorrow that after his death he did not go to see him. But through the experiences of life, his thinking had become such that he had understood what results from the distance between friend and enemy.

A small example may be given. There was a man who was very close to Jagdish Prasad Mandalji. There was a wedding at that man's house. Jagdish Prasad Mandal stayed there day and night. But the man whose work it was did not know how to distinguish between friend and enemy. All kinds of people were involved in the work. One person, who had in his mind the intention of defaming Jagdish Prasad Mandal, whatever earlier reason there may have been, added salt to the dal twice. Later, when the dal became too salty, he put the blame on Jagdish Prasad Mandal.

The same thing happened elsewhere as well. Without even adding water for boiling, someone put dry dal straight into the vessel and placed the blame on him. In the same way, during the village Durga Puja, he was once given responsibility for the dance programme so that a good performance might take place. At that time, in the villages, plays and nautanki were fewer, while dance performances of many kinds were more common. One person took responsibility for bringing the dance troupe. A fine performance was widely publicised. But when the troupe arrived, the disappointment was as great as the publicity had been.

Whenever a person steps out of the family and into society, he must accept that in any large undertaking there will be both good and burdensome elements. A person makes every effort according to his capacity, but some shortcomings remain. What then can be

done? One thing is certainly true: one should keep an eye on as many aspects of the work as possible. The same is true of any incident. If someone is ill, or if there is some other difficulty, people offer all kinds of suggestions. Some are useful, some harmful; and in such situations, the possibility of confusion naturally arises.

The first posting of the late Kali Babu was as D.S.P. at Agartala in Tripura. His salary was four hundred rupees a month. The times, too, were inexpensive. Till the end, he would say that he used to smoke cigarettes and drink liquor. He did so for about five years.

Differences had arisen within the family, and the reason was clear. An ordinary police constable could buy a ten-bigha plot, build a three-storeyed house, spend five lakhs on his daughter's marriage, and also secure employment for members of his family; whereas he, Kali Babu, remained merely an officer with empty hands. But he wished to change the family in a fundamental way. He used to call his hereditary occupation a low occupation. The family was sunk in debt. Agnatic disputes were going on in court. Kali Babu somehow settled those disputes and freed the family from debt.

Later, he thought of building a house. He set up a kiln and had bricks made. He got his younger brother, the middle one among the brothers, employed at a high school in Agartala.

Kali Babu would come to the village once a year and stay there for about a month. During that time, he would meet Jagdish Prasad Mandalji three or four times. But what could emerge from only three or four meetings in relation to the activities of an entire year? Kali Babu had his own routine. He would come after fixing his work in advance. Within eight days or so, he would finish his tasks. After that, he would visit his relatives, his in-laws, maternal relations, sisters, and others. By the time the month ended, his work would also be finished and his leave would come to an end.

In the course of work, work itself creates opportunities for conversation. He would place responsibility for one task upon Jagdish Prasad Mandalji and would also involve members of the family. Their relationship deepened. Along with regular visits,

eating and drinking together also increased.

In his standing first in high school, geography had made the greatest contribution. He would lose only one or two marks in the subject. He had a good knowledge of the North-Eastern region: Tripura, Manipur, Mizoram, Arunachal, Nagaland, and so on. Later, he moved towards a religious temperament and became inclined towards worship and ritual. After rising from D.S.P. to S.P., he had himself transferred to the training college, where he remained as S.P.

After three or four years, when the opportunity arose, he began asking Jagdish Prasad Mandalji to come to Tripura. But Jagdish Prasad Mandal was caught in a double entanglement, from family responsibilities to the expenses of lawsuits. There was no freedom from going to and coming from courts, and no freedom either to travel elsewhere.

By the time 1998 arrived, Jagdish Prasad Mandalji's desire to see the North-East had grown so strong that he could no longer restrain himself. In any case, time opened a small window for him, and that window came after he was freed from the responsibility of Durga Puja.

Another reason was that, by then, more than fifty cases had been settled, and therefore his visits to courts and legal offices had also decreased. Only two sessions cases remained: one under Section 307, attempt to murder, and the other under Section 436, arson.

Of these, the Section 436 arson case had almost disappeared. It disappeared in the sense that, during the shifting of courts between Jhanjharpur and Madhubani, the case was lost somewhere in the transfer. Of course, many people had heard orally that even case files vanish from courts, and they had also heard that cases themselves get lost. Even so, uncertainty remained. It brought him both relief and worry.

The other case, under Section 307, was still there. In that case, conviction had already been recorded; yet there was also some consolation that the punishment which might have come through the full course of law had not come in that form. Even a strong rope snaps strand by strand.

Whatever gain or loss that case may have brought, it certainly gave him one experience: how the chair of a corrupt court keeps shaking. In a sense, he did gain some relief from the courts and legal offices. Yet anxiety remained. Just as among a thousand gods and goddesses one Jagadamba glows with a fierce presence, so those two cases remained before him.

One day, when Jagdish Prasad Mandalji remembered all the cases and compared them with the I.P.C., he realised that if punishment had been given from the very beginning in each case, he would probably have spent his entire life in jail, listening there to the judgement of one case after another. But however heavily laden a mango tree may be, once the fruit ripens, or when it falls in a storm, only one or two fruits come into actual counting. That is what had happened.

The feeling that arose in his mind was like Bhim taking upon himself the responsibility of breaking the seventh gate for Abhimanyu. Then, pausing, he added together the sentences of all the cases; they came to 107 years. Looking at life, he felt that the work of a hundred years had already been completed. Had he not done those things, how would he have become guilty?

Seeing a season fit for casting off the old skin, like a snake in Sawan, Jagdish Prasad Mandal decided to change his life. Yet the life he had already lived had become a companion to the life that lay ahead.

The thought of moving towards literature arose in his mind. But he had already been a student of literature; he knew something of its direction and address. He began reading, in small portions, the works of literary writers. But again the mind paused. It paused because what is written in books becomes stronger when it is also seen with one's own eyes.

Reducing the expense of buying books, he began thinking of travelling from place to place. Leaving aside Kerala, Karnataka, and Kashmir, he travelled through and saw almost all the states of the country. But in June 2012, when he received the Tagore Literature Award in Kochi, Kerala, for his short-story collection Gaamak Jinagi, he saw Kerala too. In 1957, a left government had been formed in Kerala. It was that state of the country where the

people were fully literate. This gave him joy.

Until then, Jagdish Prasad Mandal understood geography only to the extent that Assam lay in the eastern part of the country. The other states that later came into being had emerged afterwards, and discussion about them had also been brief. He had studied geography up to the Higher Secondary level. After that, he had not studied it further. Even within that, some reduction had naturally taken place.

It was natural in this sense: just as a person who has passed M.A. and becomes a high-school teacher, or one who has passed high school and becomes a middle-school teacher, somehow adjusts himself to the situation, Jagdish Prasad Mandal too had done the same.

It was the month of Asin, the time of Durga Puja. Jagdish Prasad Mandalji took out an atlas and began working out the route. From home he would reach Biratnagar, and from Biratnagar he would go to Siliguri. There too he had a place to stay. From there he would go to Assam, and from Guwahati to Tripura.

But there was a great difference between the two parts of the journey. The bus from Guwahati to Agartala left at four in the afternoon and reached Agartala at half past one the next day. When he got down from the bus, he felt as though a ram had strayed into a flock of sheep. There was the distance of language. Hindi was understood as little as English. Up to the bus journey, Hindi had somehow served the purpose, but as soon as he got down, he became hungry and first went to a hotel to eat. Yet one clear difference struck him: the cheap food he had found in Siliguri was not available anywhere further ahead.

A small example may be given. At Barpeta in Assam, at one o'clock at night, the bus stopped in front of a hotel. The stiffened passengers got down and went inside. It was like a hall, with arrangements for passengers from three buses. For four rotis and vegetables, they charged him twenty rupees. But he noticed that those who had a plate of fish or meat were charged one hundred rupees each, whereas in Siliguri the same had been served for two rupees and fifty paise.

Coming out of the hotel, he went to the police station. No

one understood Hindi. The moment he mentioned Kali Babu's name, a constable took him to the residence.

At around half past two, Jagdish Prasad Mandalji reached Kali Babu's place. It was a fine residence with a beautiful flower garden, eight rooms, and Home Guard duty. His wife saw him first. There was a reason for this: she was in the room facing the road. She opened the window, came out, opened the gate, and went ahead to inform Kali Babu.

He was lying on the floor in the southernmost room of the residence, on a shatranji spread out on the ground.

Startled, he rose and came out. Showing him a room, he said, "Keep your bag here." Then, pointing to the bathroom, he said, "You are dusty from the journey. Bathe first."

Jagdish Prasad Mandal had the same thought in mind. He did so. As soon as he came into the room after bathing, Kali Babu said, "After eating, you can rest."

At this, Jagdish Prasad Mandal said, "I was hungry, so I ate at the bus stand."

In the evening, after tea and so on, the two set out for a walk. Kali Babu was wearing his dhoti doubled like a lungi, and a kurta without even a vest underneath. The reason was the weather. As soon as they stepped out of the residence, he began telling him about the residence to the west: "That residence belonged to the D.M. He was a Manipuri, an I.A.S. officer of the 1984 batch."

In the meantime, seeing them standing in front of the residence, the D.M. came out. When he arrived, Kali Babu said to him in Bengali, "He is a friend." Then the D.M. spoke in Hindi.

A little further ahead was the I.G.'s residence. Kali Babu's son was friends with the I.G.'s son. As soon as they reached near the residence, both boys rushed out. The I.G. was Bengali. Agartala is a Bengali-speaking region.

On the first day, they spoke of students from their four-kos area up to 1960. The next morning, while drinking tea, Kali Babu said, "Today we shall go through the office and then towards the south, up to the old Kali temple."

At ten in the morning, the two went together to the office.

The offices were large, but Kali Babu's own office was small: one almirah, two chairs, and one table. They went straight to his room. As soon as they arrived, a Bengali peon came in, a B.A. pass man who spoke fluently and with force. Kali Babu asked him about the office. After listening to everything, he said, "Bring tea."

After drinking tea, the two set out. As soon as they left the market, they moved towards the tea gardens. On both sides of the road lay hilly land. Tea plants rose up to chest height. Among them, many women, with baskets tied to their backs, were plucking tea leaves.

Speaking about tea, Kali Babu said, "Recently, a new variety has come in the name of green tea. Its cultivation has not yet spread very widely, but in the world market it has the highest demand. Its price too is the highest."

A little further ahead, they saw rubber trees. They had been planted in rows. From the size of the trees, it seemed that they must have been fifteen or twenty years old, not very large. At about chest height, the trunks had been cut, and from those cuts a milky sap was flowing. Every morning, that sap would be collected and processed into rubber.

Around twelve o'clock, the two reached the Budhi Kali Sthan. It was a small place, with only a few shops and stalls. The temple seemed to be more than a hundred years old. The building, joined with lime mortar, had cracked, flaked, and begun to crumble. After seeing the idol, Jagdish Prasad Mandal came out. It was an idol of old artistic workmanship.

But Kali Kant Babu had many mantras to recite, and so he remained inside the temple. Jagdish Prasad Mandal came out and began looking at the trees. In one part of the campus he saw mango, jackfruit, gamhari, shisham, and jamun trees growing together. Since, after Guwahati, he had not seen such a mixed cluster of trees anywhere, certain thoughts arose in his mind. Finally, his mind settled on the idea that some priest from Mithila must have served there at some time.

Jagdish Prasad Mandal was speaking for a while with the priest when Kali Babu came out of the temple. As soon as he came out, he said, "I had told you that I would show you Kamal Sagar.

This is it."

Jagdish Prasad Mandalji looked carefully and felt that it was smaller than the large pond of Berma. The ghats too seemed ordinary enough. This was understandable, because Kali Babu was familiar with Berma's large pond. Moreover, the people of both villages often compared the large pond of Berma with the large pond of Kachhubi. In that comparison, Berma's large pond stood twenty out of twenty.

Jagdish Prasad Mandalji asked, "Why was it named Sagar?"

Being a student of geography, Kali Babu paused. Then he repeated that, in Berma's large pond, a person standing on one embankment cannot recognise a person standing on the other. He had seen this himself. Its bed must be ten kathas. On the western embankment of this pond, bamboo posts had been planted to mark the border of Bangladesh. Just then, a train from Chittagong passed a little distance away.

Before leaving, Jagdish Prasad Mandal ate sweets, drank water, and had tea. Kali Kant Jha, though afflicted with diabetes, ate a little as prasad. They returned to the residence during the day itself.

By then, Kali Babu's family had become Vaishnav. It was a strictly vegetarian household. From four in the morning, he would begin singing bhajans with dance-like movements, as his Manipuri neighbour said. Since his residence did not have a brick-and-cement boundary wall, there was instead a light screen of split bamboo. From his residence, the neighbour would see him exercising a great deal.

That Manipuri neighbour was fond of meat. In appearance, he himself resembled the people of Mithilanchal, but his wife was short in stature, like a hill woman. It was the time of Durga Puja. Close by, towards the east, at a distance of about two bighas, the Puja was being held. Officers came with their families to see it. It was not like the ten-day Puja in our region. It did not begin from the first day; it began from the seventh. Even so, it was celebrated far more elaborately than in Mithilanchal. Kali Babu said that here, in Tripura as well as in Bangladesh, everyone observed Kali Puja.

From the north-east of Assam down towards the south lie the

states of Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram, Manipur, Arunachal, and Nagaland. The railway line extends only a little further. The main means of transport here are buses and trucks. It is a region filled with forests and hills, with thousands of kinds of trees and plants. Fertile land is limited. Yet where there are trees and plants of so many kinds, there must also be fruits to eat. Dhakiya saag grows there like grass in the fields and forests.

Of course, as soon as Jagdish Prasad Mandal arrived, Kali Babu told him, "Whatever is different here from our place, you must see it and also eat it." In any case, Kali Babu himself was such an experienced and practical man that he had already arranged everything. Comparatively, that region, Tripura and the adjoining areas, receives more rainfall than ours. Because of this, like the low-lying chaur fields of our region, much of the paddy there is harvested in water itself. As a result, the cultivation of Kartik crops appears less common than in our place.

In our region, Kartik is regarded as a good month because it marks one season of grain. Along with that, it is also the season for vegetables, greens, fruits, and orchard produce. Broadly speaking, the variety of cultivation that takes place in Kartik does not take place in any other season. Where water dries late from the fields, some oilseeds, jute, and paddy are cultivated.

About sixty to seventy per cent of Tripura is covered with forests, scrub, and hills. Thirty to forty per cent of the land is cultivable. Paddy is the principal crop there. Considering the kind of resources the region possesses, development has not taken place. Even now, the people are being deceived. The tribal communities of Tripura have to face such high prices that it is difficult to believe. Foreign organisations, however, have laid down such a pattern of education that railway development does not take place. Yes, it is certainly true that laying railway lines there is not as easy as in our region; being a hilly area, it is expensive.

In our own region too, there are some political parties of that kind, which do not want machines to be used in the construction of roads, bridges, canals, or channels. Tractors should not carry earth; people themselves should carry it and build. They should first see whether labourers are available even for ordinary household

farming in the village. In such a situation, how proper is it to obstruct canals, channels, embankments, and roads?

Animal husbandry is almost absent in that region. This does not mean that animals do not exist there, or that there are no animals at all. The forests are full of such animals that, before them, the value of our cows and buffaloes would seem pale. The same is true of trees and plants.

In the Sundarban region, let alone trees worth thousands or lakhs, there are trees worth crores of rupees. There is no need even to speak of bamboo. There is a tale that such-and-such a khalifa would uproot bamboo and use it as a tooth-stick; here, that tale seemed to become visible. There are forests of bamboo of that kind, just as in Mithilanchal there are thin bamboo twigs. Cutting one, he made a tooth-stick from it.

This does not mean that only such bamboo grows in that region. There are dozens of varieties of bamboo. From thin twigs to bamboo one and a half or twice as thick as the bamboo of our place, all kinds are found there.

Cultivation takes place on the hills without proper soil. It is called the jhum system. Small plots are made; the grass, wild growth, and scrub that grow there are cut and burnt, and then cultivation is done. After three years, that plot is abandoned and another field is prepared.

The people of Bangladesh are very poor. There are reasons for this. First, before 1947 they were like us; with Independence and Partition, they fell into the hands of Pakistan. Between the two wings there were many kinds of inequality, in language, behaviour, agriculture, and other matters. Power went into the hands of Pakistan, and East Bengal fell behind. Being a sea-side region, it was already frequently devastated by sea storms; on top of that, adverse rule pushed it still further down.

Tripura's economic condition too is not very strong, but it receives substantial government grants. It is another matter that these grants are not properly used and are mostly looted. Even so, some industries and occupations do continue on a small scale. Along with a jute factory, small-scale industries produce bamboo umbrella handles and many other bamboo articles. Agartala's

market too is not very large. Aluminium utensils are also made there.

Thousands of workers from Bangladesh pull rickshaws and work as labourers in Agartala. Between the two sides, the visa or passport system does not appear to function in any practical sense. Every day, Bangladeshi workers enter Agartala early in the morning and return in the evening. Whether they are counted at the border when they come and go, I do not know.

When Jagdish Prasad Mandalji went to see the border post, a soldier from Madhya Pradesh was on duty. Since the soldier was Hindi-speaking, they spoke for a while. When he asked him, the soldier said that every day, from six to eight in the morning, these people, the Bangladeshis, entered; they were counted, and again, at the time of return, between five and seven in the evening, they were counted.

From the point of view of language, English, Kokborok, Bengali, and Manipuri are spoken in Tripura. When Jagdish Prasad Mandalji went to Tripura in 1998, Kali Babu was D.I.G., Home Guards. His work too was relatively light. Just as he himself wished to remain away from disputes and complications, so his posting also allowed him that distance.

Four days after Jagdish Prasad Mandal reached there, Kali Babu was transferred. He was made D.I.G., Administration, and transferred to North Tripura. On the fifth day, Kali Babu's whole family, along with Jagdish Prasad Mandalji, set out to see Kailashahar. At ten o'clock, with six members of the force, everyone departed.

Agartala lies in West Tripura, close to Bangladesh. In South Tripura, extremist disturbances were greater, and therefore they could not go there. While going, he had passed much of the route at night, and so he had not been able to see much. But on the journey from Agartala to Kailashahar, he had more time to look around. They left Agartala at ten o'clock and reached Kailashahar at half past four. On the way, they stopped at three places for fifteen or twenty minutes each.

Since everything was new in the new place, no programme for sightseeing could be made for two days. From the third day,

moving about and seeing places began again.

It was the month of Asin, and paddy crops stood in the fields. There was also high land, where preparations were being made for oilseeds and potatoes. Since it was a region of forests and hills, he saw trees and plants different from those of his own place. Mango trees were there too, but they were different from the mango trees of our region. The mangoes there are not eaten after ripening as ours are. As soon as the mango begins to ripen, worms appear inside it and make the pulp crumbly; it no longer remains fit to eat.

Among the important places of Tripura is Unakoti. A programme was made to visit it. It is said of Unakoti that when the Dwapar age was nearing its end and the coming of Kaliyug was being invoked, the gods thought that a very bad age was about to arrive. It would become difficult to preserve honour, dignity, and social respect. If that was so, it would be better to leave the earth and make their dwelling in the sea.

The word un means one. Just as we say unchalis, unnais, untis, and unhattar, meaning one less than forty, one less than twenty, one less than thirty, and one less than seventy, in the same way, Unakoti means one less than a crore.

On hearing the name of the place, Jagdish Prasad Mandalji felt great joy. One reason for his joy was that Kali Babu had narrated the story with such animation, almost dancing as he spoke, that his curiosity had grown even more. Besides, until then he had only heard of eighty-four lakh gods; today he had the chance to see a crore. There was another advantage: even if he did not go to any other sacred place, he would still receive the fruit of pilgrimage.

In the night itself, all the gods fled and took the road towards the sea. They were on foot. As they went on, by the time they reached Tripura, Unakoti, and Matahari, dawn broke. The buffalo herdsmen had already untied their buffaloes and taken them out to graze. The gods thought it would be better not to flee in daylight; therefore, all of them pitched their camp in one place. That place is Unakoti.

The shrine is spread over a large area. There are great hills, filled with trees, plants, forest, and scrub. Waterfalls descend from the hills. The living beings that existed before human beings, those

very forms became gods and goddesses. It is hilly land, but it contains stones of many kinds: from sandy stone and glassy stone to hard, fused rock. There are stones that break by hand, and there are also stones that are very hard. There are fruit-bearing trees and groves of bananas as well.

In the middle are shops and stalls, though these stand outside the sacred zone. At the place where waterfall water descends from the hill, the image of Arjun and Krishna's chariot from the Dwapar age is carved, and this is the central point of Unakoti.

The North-East, consisting of Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Arunachal, Nagaland, and Sikkim, is in itself almost a country. It is a cluster of forests, hills, lakes, and river valleys. From the point of view of language too, it is multilingual. Each region has its own language. Broadly, one finds Bengali, English, Hindi, Khasi, Garo, Kokborok, Manipuri, Mizo, Ao, Konyak, Angami, Sema, Lotha, Monpa, Aka Miju, Sherdukpen, Nishi, Apatani, Hill Miri, Tagin, Adi, Idu, Digaru, Mijikhamri, Singpho, Tangla, Nocte, Wancho, Lepcha, Bhutia, Nepali, Limbu, and others.

The king of Agartala, in the feudal age, belonged to the Burman family. The Burmans who later became lyricists and music directors in the world of films belonged to that very lineage and region. The Tripura Assembly building stands in the house given by that family.

Among the tribal communities, the food habits are different from ours. There is a difference in the items of food and drink as well. In their feasts, the order is not like ours, where we begin with rice, dal, and vegetables, and as the meal proceeds, better and finer arrangements come. There it is not so. The finer items are served first, and as the meal moves forward, the order gradually becomes simpler.

After the year 2000, Kali Babu began to fall ill. First, his eyes deteriorated. He underwent an operation in Calcutta. From the beginning, he had suffered from constipation. He also developed diabetes. After becoming I.G., he remained well for some time. In between, he also became D.G.P. and went to Meghalaya, Shillong. But his mind did not settle there. After six months, he returned to

Agartala as I.G.

Four years before retirement, he became bedridden. Since he was still in service, he did not return to the village. He continued to receive treatment there. He went to Delhi, Calcutta, and other places, but could not recover. His body had lost all ease. His abdomen had been operated upon three or four times. Suffering made his mind irritable as well. After two years, before retirement, he returned to the village. Both kinds of illness, physical and mental, began to afflict him inwardly.

The cause of his mental distress was this: when he became I.G., the Home Department sent him thirty-two crore rupees without any scheme. Whatever the intention may have been, Kali Babu considered himself a man of principle. He could not understand where such money could be spent without a plan.

He wrote a letter to the Home Department saying that the money had been received, but since there was no scheme, they should send one. No reply came. It was a trap. He returned the money. Returning it proved so damaging that he became entangled. An explanation was demanded from him. He did give a written reply, but with a diseased body he could not run about and pursue the matter. He had also been kept away from duty.

On one side, there was pressure from the Home Department; on the other, separation from duty. An economic problem arose. On top of this, the cost of diet, care, medicines, and treatment had increased greatly. He became helpless.

There is a reason why Kali Babu was called a “pandit”: he had his own viewpoint on the Gita, the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita. He had studied well the eight volumes of Acharya Rajneesh’s commentary, collected in eight parts, which at that time cost eighteen hundred rupees. That study had changed his outlook.

His hope in life had broken. In their final meeting, he spoke of many departmental matters, of what is seen openly and what is stolen secretly. As a friend, he also told Jagdish Prasad Mandal many things from the beginning of his service life up to that time.

On reaching Agartala as D.S.P., he established his identity within six months. As an honest officer, he entered the public mind through the administration. He never touched cash, ornaments,

jewellery, clothes, or garments from anyone, though he did not refuse food and drink. The first five years of his life became a distinct phase in themselves. He drank liquor, smoked cigarettes, and ate chicken and eggs.

It was during that very period, in 1971, that the Bangladesh war took place against Pakistan. People of Mithilanchal may remember that there was rain throughout that year. That year seemed to be made of rain. Whatever straw and leaves people had kept for thatching houses rotted away. In any case, houses made of straw and leaves, with weak supporting material on four sides, never had much strength; if they were not rethatched, the need to patch them up certainly arose.

Among the labouring classes, most of the paddy-field thatching material came from dhan-kheti, the marua crop that preceded paddy. It was cheap in this sense: when marua ripened, the cultivators remained in the fields, and those who cut the stalks would give the marua grain to the cultivators and take the stalks home to thatch their houses.

In the Bangladesh war of 1971, India supported Bangladesh. Indiraji was the Prime Minister. She received full support from Russia, the Soviet Union. At that time, the Soviet Union was very powerful. It is still powerful even now, but... A twenty-year treaty of friendship was signed between India and the Soviet Union. America, which had stood firmly with Pakistan, received a fitting answer.

In the history of the world, thirty-one thousand soldiers raised their hands in Bangladesh. They surrendered. During that war, the top leaders were staying in Agartala, Tripura. Indiraji too would go there quietly, without any public information. Tripura had become a military cantonment. At that time, the command of the war was in the hands of the military, but the command of security remained with the administration. The responsibility of the guest house in which the leaders of Bangladesh were staying rested with Kali Babu.

During that period, before the Bangladesh war, Kali Kant Jha abused and even beat a responsible chairman. What happened was that, in his name, the man had eaten a great deal of fish from a

fish trader. He was a Bengali brother, and the waters of Tripura are even softer. One day, when Kali Babu was going on duty, that trader saluted him and laughingly told him the matter.

Kali Babu struck at the root of the affair. The chairman was caught. But as the saying goes, in loot, even the spinning wheel makes a profit. In Tripura, politics between the Communist Party and the Congress Party was full of tension. A three-member committee was formed under the chairmanship of Nripen Babu. Nripen Chakraborty remained unmarried throughout life, led the Communist Party, was a triple M.A., and also became Chief Minister twice.

Kali Babu had known the experience of life's struggles from his student days. His fellow administrative officers would say to him, "Keep your bundle tied." He would reply, "It is already tied."

Nripen Babu reached the root of the incident. During the inquiry, on the pretext of conversation, he took Kali Babu to a guest house in the forest. He gave no information to anyone. But those who see, do see. They remained there the whole night. Because of this, Kali Babu's prestige rose further. Yet prestige too can become life-destroying.

Kali Babu himself was one of five brothers, and he had four children of his own: three daughters and one son. He had married off all three daughters. His brothers and father were still alive. Both were firm and strong. His father died one year before him. His brother is still alive.

His son's marriage had been delayed. Talks for the marriage were going on in Supaul district. The girl's father too was an S.P. in the Railways. When Kali Babu became convinced that he would not live much longer, he immediately called them and solemnised the marriage in a temple. He died only fifteen or twenty days after his service ended. But the problem of pension had already arisen.

Before going to Tripura, Jagdish Prasad Mandalji had gone to Hyderabad. There was a national-level literary and political seminar there. He had gone with a group from Madhubani district. Everyone had obtained a one-month rail pass. But it had been issued according to the route.

At that time, within the party in Madhubani district, the late

Anant Bhagat was in charge of the literary front. Anant Bhagat came from an ordinary family. As simple and unassuming as he was, he was equally loyal. Though his economic condition was not good, he was a whole-time leader of the party. At that time, responsibility for Madhepur had been given to him.

The programme in Hyderabad lasted four days. On the literary platform, the subject was Premchand's literature; and on the political platform, there was extensive discussion on the problems that arise in making laws in the country, interpreting them, and reaching decisions. A programme for future work was also decided.

Ramesh Chandra gave a detailed interpretation of Premchand's literature in the inaugural address. He belonged to Punjab, but he spoke in English. The reason was that the programme was being held in South India, and that too in a place where English had greater currency than Hindi. It was a very large programme. By common agreement, Premchand was accepted as a writer of progressive thought.

On the political platform, the main speaker was Bhupesh Gupta, who had attended more than a hundred sittings of the Rajya Sabha continuously. He spoke in detail about the obstacles that arise in the process of law-making and about the manner in which work is carried out.

Bhupesh Gupta belonged to Bengal. He remained unmarried throughout his life. The late Indiraji, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, the late Jyoti Babu, Jyoti Basu, Chief Minister of Bengal, and Bhupesh Gupta had all studied law in England at the same time.

The second main speaker was Justice B. R. Ayyar. Justice B. R. Ayyar had retired from the Supreme Court. He delivered an extensive speech on how difficult it is to resolve problems. He was the same Justice B. R. Ayyar whom Mahamaya Babu had appointed in 1967 in Bihar to head the commission against the corrupt former ministers of the Congress government. He was a well-known judge.

The third main speaker was a senior advocate of the Madhya Pradesh High Court. He discussed at length the problems that arise while arguing cases in court.

In temperament as well as in labour, the people of South India are different. They believe in working with an open heart. Jagdish Prasad Mandalji himself wished to see some rural areas, but that did not happen. What he saw from the train was not what he had wished to see.

He had to stay in Hyderabad for only four days, and even within that, how could he leave the very programme for which he had gone? Hyderabad itself is a large city. Even so, he did see the main places worth seeing: the Usha Company, the marble hills, Charminar, the royal palace of the Nizam, the lake, and other places.

Hyderabad is a very busy city. There is adequate provision for transport there, but even so it is a city of great crowding and pressure. The arrangement of food and drink is somewhat different from ours. But since it was a national-level programme, food from across the country was naturally arranged. The preparation of jackfruit there, however, was not only different from that of our place; it was also better.

At the time of departure and return, there was some haste and confusion. The tickets were reserved, but by the time they reached the platform, the train had begun to move. Everyone from Madhubani scattered in different directions. Thinking that they would all gather at the next station, Jagdish Prasad Mandalji climbed into the ladies' compartment.

Until then, he had never seen a ladies' compartment. When he climbed in and thought of sitting down, he saw that the entire coach was occupied by women. The T.T. too was a woman. But unlike in our region, the passengers did not burst out shouting. Jagdish Prasad Mandalji looked towards them, thinking that if they asked something, then he would reply. They too remained quiet, looked at him, and smiled.

Jagdish Prasad Mandal had no worry at all. If in the trains of one and the same country there could be two different customs, what of it?

After a while, the T.T. came near him. She had understood that he was a passenger from North India. She said that this was the ladies' compartment. She spoke in Hindi, though in the manner in

which middle-school children in our region speak Hindi.

He felt it necessary to introduce himself. Speaking of his journey, he told her that in haste he had boarded the train and had therefore entered that compartment. Otherwise, why would he have come there? He said that he would change coaches ahead; his companions too were there, and he would find them as well. ❑

RAMPATTI JAIL

☰

Rampatti Jail had been built, but as it had not yet been inaugurated, it lay unused. Is there any less pushing and crowding even in hell? Those who may have spent ten or twenty days in the Madhubani Chaki ward will remember it. There, leave aside a year, many people had remained for several years.

Both before and after Independence, Madhubani Jail had continued to function. One thing, however, was certainly there: even inside the jail there was division. Ward No. 02 was for people belonging to political parties; the rest were ordinary criminal prisoners. This was so because neither crime is of one kind, nor are criminals of one kind.

But jail is jail. From the great mahant to the petty flower-plucker, all have to live in one place. Yet theft and petty pilfering also continued within the business of jail. Someone would steal peanuts meant for breakfast, someone jaggery. Someone would tamper with mustard oil, someone with something else.

At the time of Independence, Madhubani district, which was then a subdivision, stood at the threshold of freedom. Since we have reached that boundary of Independence, let us also look briefly at one Englishman who loved language. There was an S.D.O. named Grierson. He went from village to village trying to understand the inner life of language. He did not merely try; he wrote volume after volume of books, which now sit in the

cupboards of great libraries like ornaments, adorning them like jewels.

For language and literature, government and non-government institutions did a great deal of work. Yet Grierson's service to Maithili remains trapped in the drawers of cupboards.

Just as literary creation is both experiential and intellectual, so is language. If we understand Maithili words merely as words derived from Sanskrit, we do injustice to Maithili. Justice will be done only when Maithili words are seen as words belonging to the Vedic way of life. Each word has the power to prepare the map of some work of life. The influence of Sanskrit is accepted because the Vedic language was Sanskrit.

I shall not move further into the debate on language, yet one point seems necessary: the style of Vedic Sanskrit is experiential, whereas that of classical Sanskrit is more emotional and imaginative. The emotional direction gradually became more and more imaginative. As that emotional direction grew stronger, literature moved further away from life, from the living order of life.

The reason Rampatti Jail had not been inaugurated was that no one, from the administration to the contractor, was ready to finalise the matter. Some work remained pending, and some bills and payments remained pending. But everyone's eye was on consuming the scheme.

The state left parties, the C.P.I. and the C.P.M., launched a Jail Bharo movement around their burning issues. The burning issues of the entire state were certainly involved, but for Mithilanchal there were two major demands. The first was that, along with the Kosi canal, dams should be built at Nunthar, Shishapani, and Barahkshetra to generate hydroelectric power, so that agriculture as well as industry could grow.

Even today, some people believe that factories are needed only in mining regions. But that is not so. It is also true that, among the many kinds of factories that exist, if fifty-five per cent run on materials from mining areas, forty-five per cent run on agricultural produce.

The second issue was that the Maithili language should receive official recognition, that is, it should be included in the Eighth Schedule. This would add one important link to the development of Mithila.

Madhubani district registered its participation in that movement with great force and enthusiasm. Dozens of lawyers were also involved. More than a thousand workers were in jail. The day fixed for Madhepur and Lakhnaur blocks, with demonstration and arrest, was also the day allotted to Bisfi.

Jagdish Prasad Mandalji and others were outside the gate of the district office, the D.M.'s office. Purveji, the late Rajkumar Purve, entered through the rear gate of the office and caught the collar of the S.P., who was standing behind. Inside and outside, there was sudden uproar and confusion. A lathi charge took place, though not on a very large scale.

Jagdish Prasad Mandal reached Rampatti Jail. Eighteen persons from Berma were there. Nagendraji, Dr Nagendra Kumar Jha of Paithghat, Jagdish Prasad Mandal, and others had occupied the veranda of the women's ward. All the MLAs and Members of the Legislative Council from the district were also there. Among the MLAs were Purveji, the late Raj Kumar Purve; Tejnarayanji, Shri Tej Narayan Jha; Lal Bihariji, Shri Lal Bihari Yadav; Ramanji, Ram Lakhan "Raman", MLA of the C.P.I.; Baijnathji, Shri Baidyanath Yadav, former MLA; and Chaudharyji, Shri Krishna Chandra Chaudhary.

Inside the jail, speeches and discussions took place twice a

day. The main speaker was Chaudharyji. Shri Krishna Chaudhary was a polished scholar. His command over language was such that not a single word would be less or more than needed. He had an extraordinary ability to explain any subject exactly as it stood. At that time, the party's daily newspaper, Janshakti, was being published. Chaudharyji was its editor, and Jagdish Prasad Mandalji was a correspondent for Janshakti.

The late Krishna Chandra Chaudhary was a fine speaker. He also wrote well. Perhaps he did not write much in Maithili, but he wrote several books in Hindi and English. As learned as he was, he also came from a cultured and well-settled family. He ate a great deal of betel and also smoked cigarettes. He had, of course, come to jail with nothing on him, but after drinking tea in the morning, his mind began to long for betel. Jagdish Prasad Mandal and the others had already made arrangements for betel.

The jail too was hardly like a jail. There was neither sufficient government staff nor proper government arrangement. Everything was managed by the prisoners themselves. Even the gate remained open. Demonstrators moved about everywhere, inside and outside. In the afternoon, Alha would be sung to the beat of the dholak.

Chaudharyji had no fixed account of how much tea he took. Whenever he came, Jagdish Prasad Mandal would offer him tea and betel. After that, conversation would begin.

In many districts of Bihar, demonstrators began to be released after only two days. But in Madhubani, the case of assault and lathi charge made the matter heavier. After two days, Bhogendraji too came out of Darbhanga Jail and moved to Madhubani Jail.

After thirteen days, an order came for release, but not for everyone. An order also came to send thirty-five persons to

Muzaffarpur Jail. On the thirteenth day, when the time came to leave, no one was ready to come out. How could they leave without some kind of farewell? The demand first arose for dhoti, kurta, vest, gamchha, and chadar, but that did not happen. In the end, each person received one lungi and one gamchha.

This was the last jail journey of the party movement. After that, even when Jagdish Prasad Mandal went to jail, it was only for a day or two. Many times he would return from the police station itself.

In any case, Jagdish Prasad Mandal and his companions were travellers of a double jail. In their own village too, so many cases had been filed that one warrant or another was always pending against them. By the time the year 2000 arrived, all the cases had ended, except two. One was under Section 307, attempt to murder, which was in the High Court. The other was under Section 436, arson, which was in the court of the District Judge.

Just as, when floodwater enters a pond, the water of the whole pond becomes restless and mobile, and then, when the flood begins to recede, slowly becomes still again, so it happened in the course of the lawsuits. Yet things had not become fully settled. The reason was that the two remaining cases were sessions cases. What happened was that the file of the district arson case fell buried somewhere, while in the High Court the running about also became less frequent.

By then, that is, before the year 2000, Jagdish Prasad Mandalji had travelled through more than half the country. On one side, he had seen Mumbai, the economic capital of the country; on the other, he had also seen Nagaland and Arunachal. Along with Shantiniketan of Rabindra Babu, Maharshi Rabindranath Tagore, he had seen the Sundarbans, Gangasagar, the peg planted by Kabir Das near the sea, and the Sun Temple as well.

There are contradictions of many kinds. On one side, Hazari

Babu, Acharya Hazari Prasad Dwivedi, who taught Hindi at Shantiniketan from 1930 to 1950, would become enchanted by the fragrance of the siris flower. On the other side, in Mithilanchal, this very siris is prohibited. It is used neither for household work nor for making a cot or chair. Not only that, the fate of its fruit is much the same. The tree grows very large, but as the saying goes, "A man may be strong and brave, but without a moustache he is nothing." So it is with the siris.

His mind accepted that this was the play of eastern and western currents. What kind of tree should be planted for flowers, what kind for flowers as well as fruit, and where should trees without flower or fruit be planted? These were questions. Yet the western wind often wraps the eastern wind under itself. If it did not, how did forests and shrubs from places unknown take root in the soil of Mithilanchal? Mithilanchal is, after all, a dwelling place of the finest fruits, the finest flowers, and the finest timber trees. Mithilanchal will develop only when it is studied deeply, and when favourable conditions are created for the proper use of its resources.

In the course of his travels, Jagdish Prasad Mandalji had still missed a place as remarkable as Rajasthan. The journey was certainly in his mind, but there was also a shortage of both time and money. His maternal cousin's son was a supervisor in the D.L.F. Cement factory in Pali district of Rajasthan, and he kept urging him again and again to come.

He, Tej Narayan Mandal, was not formally educated. Being from the Kosi region, his village school had been destroyed, and so had the village itself. There was certainly enough land and property to sustain life, but it had fallen between the Kosi and the Kamala. He fled to Rajasthan. He got a job in the D.L.F. Cement factory as a casual labourer.

A man named N. K. Parikh, who had built a four-room house and held a good position in the same cement factory, rented one room of that house to Tej Narayan. Gradually, the relationship between the two men grew. Parikh's in-laws' home was at Kakarbhitta in Nepal, and therefore his wife was familiar with Mithilanchal. That became the reason for the strengthening of their relationship. Their bond became like that of brother and sister.

Their family relations too deepened. N. K. Parikh told Tej Narayan that he would teach him in his spare time. Truly, he taught him and made him a supervisor in the factory.

Jagdish Prasad Mandal made up his mind that the only problem was getting there. Once he reached, would Tej Narayan not do at least this much for him? He would see the places worth seeing, and he would also see the land, water, and air of that region. One day, when some family income came into his hands, he simply rose and set out. He already had the habit of travelling alone. Passing through Delhi, he reached Rajasthan.

After becoming a supervisor, Tej Narayan had also brought his family, his wife, and one of his brothers from the village. He got his brother employed in the same factory. Leaving N. K. Parikh's house, he rented a three-room house and began living there.

A latrine was not considered as necessary as a room. One reason was that, in that region, the population was thin; another was the cover provided by scattered thorny bushes and small trees, with leaves and thorns like babul. After getting down from the bus in Rajasthan, Jagdish Prasad Mandalji went straight to the factory and asked in the office about his nephew.

Tej Narayan was not on duty. A man from Patna happened to meet him and took him to Tej Narayan's quarters by the time the evening light was beginning to fade.

There was electric light. Nearby stood a small market of thirty or forty shops, with the bus road passing through it. Since it was dark, he could not see much.

It was the month of Chait, and the heat was intense. After ten in the morning, one did not feel like stepping out of the house. Yet after midnight, as the night deepened, a thick chadar became necessary. For sleeping, he had been given a cot along with a quilt. At daybreak, he had the opportunity to see the place properly.

In front of the quarters stood four or five ashoka trees of medium size. The landlord's house was about half a kilometre away, but he had built a cattle-shed nearby. And what cattle there were: two milch buffaloes, though without calves.

The landlord's family consisted of three men. The father was old and spent most of his time looking after the buffaloes. One son worked in the same cement factory. The other looked after everything from farming and household affairs to milking the buffaloes and selling milk on a motorcycle. Every day, he supplied milk to a shopkeeper three kilometres away. They had sixty bighas of land and one boring as well. The fields were pure sandy soil, in a region of hills and sand. In the name of trees, there was only sangri. Apart from the hills, small and large pieces of stone lay scattered across the fields.

Early the next morning, Jagdish Prasad Mandalji became acquainted with the landlord. He was about sixty-five or seventy years old and wore only a dhoti. When, in the morning, his son began milking the buffaloes, Jagdish Prasad Mandal saw that the milk was not much, yet the man poured water into it. He asked, "Why did you add water?"

The man replied, "If we do not add water to the milk, the buffalo's udder will burn."

Hearing this answer, Jagdish Prasad Mandal could think of nothing to say. The man too went away.

On the third day, a programme was made to visit the Ajmer dargah. It was a very beautiful place. Being in a hilly region, it seemed even more polished and bright. On the eastern side of the shrine rose a high hill. At first, he thought that Hindus might be stopped from entering, but that was not so. Among the visitors, Hindus were in the majority. Vows and offerings were abundant.

While he was still inside the shrine, he saw a procession with music and instruments. There were elephants and camels, and a four-wheeled vehicle without an engine, pushed from the front and back by men, carrying men and women in festive arrangement. There were groups of babas of many kinds, from naked ascetics to richly dressed men.

After seeing the dargah, Jagdish Prasad Mandalji went to Pushkar. In Ajmer, he also saw trees of mango, jamun, latam, and others. Rose cultivation was very extensive. Pushkar is like a large pond. On its bank stands the temple of Brahma. There are many dharmashalas and many ghats. Just as there was a crowd at the

dargah, there was a crowd at Pushkar too.

On the way there, he had got down from the bus at Jaipur, but he had arrived at night. Early the next morning, while it was still dark, he caught another bus and therefore had no opportunity to see anything that day. After the third day at Ajmer, he reached Jaipur. Its art and architecture are truly excellent, especially the ancient works. He also went to Meera's place, Merta. A rail-bus kind of train runs there.

There is a temple there with many idols. The temple is not very large, but it is not cramped either. It has a rounded, drum-like form. An iron gate is fixed for entry and exit, but it remains closed most of the time. Around it, at about chest height, are broad and long window-like openings fitted with thick iron bars. Through these, one can walk around and see inside. Within, a royal court scene has been created. Just as everything is arranged in a royal court, everything there is made of gold.

There are, of course, place after place and temple after temple in this country. Just as this is true in the field of art, it is true in the economic field as well. Yet the essential thing is missing from most places. That thing is their inner sanctity, their mahatmya. Take, for example, Kamrup Kamakhya. At Kamrup Kamakhya, every kind of sacrifice is offered, but in other places there is difference and distinction. At some shrines, only particular things are sacrificed. The same is true of prasad. The prasad of Jagannath has its own distinct form and quality.

Of course, the true measure of the costliness of a place can be known only by living there through all twelve months. Jagdish Prasad Mandalji did not live in Rajasthan for that long. Yet in the few days he stayed there, he saw that a hand-span of vegetables, which would not cost even eight annas in our region, was being sold for ten rupees.

Jagdish Prasad Mandalji had gone to Rajasthan in 1999. In those days, tea there was sold for three rupees, while in our place it cost one rupee. Similarly, a betel quid there was sold for three rupees, whereas in our region it cost twelve annas.

He did not see hundreds of kinds of grain in the shops there as one does in our region, but in the price of grain the difference

from our place was smaller. Some things were even cheaper, such as groundnuts. Groundnut is cultivated there. Their eating and drinking are not like ours: limited life, limited food.

Poverty exists there too. But the causes of poverty in our region are different, and the causes there are different. As the name desert suggests, the land is truly lifeless in many respects. There is neither a pleasant climate like ours, nor the delight of trees and plants. Yet because royal families and industrial houses have settled there, there are factories and mills, as well as comfortable vehicles and transport.

Jagdish Prasad Mandal did not know the exact measure, but the boundary wall that surrounded the area seemed to extend over more than ten kilometres. In the middle stood the cement factory. Special arrangements for water and electricity were in place.

To the south of the factory lay a long and wide hill. Stone was brought from it by breaking the rock with dynamite. More than three thousand labourers worked in the cement factory, but without any secure footing in life. Yes, there were a few who received good salaries and other facilities, but the lives of most labourers had no proper stability. There was neither housing for the workers nor proper wages.

The chief manager of the factory was a retired I.A.S. officer. Inside the factory premises, he had good housing arrangements, and his salary too was good.

This too is a misfortune of Mithilanchal: even after retirement, good officers and teachers begin taking up second jobs again and again. Tell me, then, when will the stage of vanaprastha or sannyas come for you, or will you not allow it to come at all? Where the condition of Mithila's learned and honoured people remains like this, who will be the protector except God?

Make a small earthen lamp of raw clay. Tear a worn-out old sari and make a wick. Soak it in a little mustard oil, and in the evening light it at the Dihwar Sthan. Stand on one leg, fold both hands, and pray: give us knowledge, give us wealth, give us family.

Seeing the chief manager of the factory, a thought arose in Jagdish Prasad Mandalji's mind: do such post-retirement jobs not strengthen corruption?

Less than one-fourth of the workers had permanent employment. They had at least some facilities. The remaining three-fourths worked under contractors. Their wages were certainly not very low; they were higher than the daily wages in the villages.

The working system too was practical. For example, there were two supervisors. One motorcycle had been provided between them. When one supervisor's duty ended, he would return to his quarters on that motorcycle, the same motorcycle on which the supervisor coming on duty had arrived. Thus, the person receiving the duty account became the companion of the person handing it over. Because of this, everyone remained punctual and firm in his duty. The factory ran twenty-four hours a day.

The sandy soil of Rajasthan is not of one kind everywhere. In some places there is fine sand, and that too has been brought under cultivation. But the water level lies very deep below, and therefore even boring is costly. Wheat, groundnut, peanut, bajra, and mustard were cultivated here and there.

Rajasthan does not have the many kinds of animals and birds that we have in our region. Peacocks are seen here and there, but the flocks of crows, mynas, herons, and small birds that gather in our place are not there. The environment too is not favourable. There are neither trees and plants for habitation and varied food, nor proper arrangements for drinking water. A few cows are seen, but the shortage of fodder and water makes their condition difficult. In the early morning, people bring green and dry fodder on tractors and scatter it; the cows eat their share. Pigeons are there too, but eating them is forbidden. If one eats them and is caught, one has to pay a fine.

A year and a half before he went to Rajasthan, Jagdish Prasad Mandal's mother had died at the age of ninety-five. It was his final sight of his mother. It was about twelve o'clock in the day. She asked Jagdish Prasad Mandal's wife:

"Have you all eaten?"

The daughter-in-law replied, "Yes."

"Is the child in the village?"

She had seen him while he was eating, but immediately

forgot. A doubt arose in her mind.

"Make a little bedding for me too."

The daughter-in-law spread a bed beside her on the veranda. Sitting as she was, she slowly slid on to the bedding, lay down, and remained lying there. It was the day of Ekadashi.

Until the last moment, Jagdish Prasad Mandal did not lose hope in his mother. Great days of hardship came in life, yet she remained so strong that he continued to hold on to the path of hope.

His mother had been born in a respectable and well-settled family. Between two siblings, brother and sister, her father's family stood within that line. The son of her sister, Narsingh Mandal of Deep village, had been shot in the movement of the Jhanjharpur circle in 1942. The maternal village of both Jagdish Prasad Mandal and Narsingh Mandal was the same family at Mansara in Ghanshyampur block of Darbhanga district.

His mother's marital home was in Berma; her elder sister's marital home, whose son was Narsingh Mandal, was in Deep; and her eldest sister, the eldest among seven brothers and sisters, was married in Godhanpur. The Mansara family was advanced not only in property but also in the number and strength of its members.

His mother's maternal aunt's marital home was in Berma. The pond belonging to that family is still known as Adhikari Pokhar. It lies beside Jagdish Prasad Mandal's house and remains useful even now. Since hand-pumps have come into every home, bathing there has decreased, but it is still a storehouse of fish and makhana. In the same line, there were also three wells, of which only ruins now remain. In the division among three brothers, silver rupees were not counted; they were weighed on a balance and divided into shares of twelve paseris each.

The reason Jagdish Prasad Mandal's father was married into such a family lay in an earlier history, one that included lineage, origin, and family conduct. Until the generation above Jagdish Prasad Mandal, ploughing the field and milking cows had been forbidden in the family. Now it is no longer so.

On the recommendation of his mother's maternal aunt, his mother was married into an ordinary family. Five persons came for

the formal inspection of the house before the marriage, and all five were of five different kinds. Each looked at the family from his own point of view. Among them was also a tall, well-built, wrestler-like man. After eating, when he was leaving the house, he struck himself hard against the doorframe. In anger, he burst out:

"Shall we form kinship in such a place, where there is neither a proper house nor a proper doorway!"

But everyone listened in silence. His mother's maternal aunt had her own reasoning: even if there was no great property, what of it? If there were fields, land, ponds, and wells of one's own, what sorrow could there be? There was a reason behind this too. After living for only a short while in her marital home, that aunt had become a widow.

The second recommendation for his mother's marriage came from that aunt. His mother's eldest sister was in Godhanpur. Godhanpur lies close to Berma. Among seven brothers and sisters, that aunt was the eldest and his mother the youngest. There was a gap of nearly thirty years between them. She too had become a sonless widow, though she did have two children. Her recommendation also carried weight.

The third recommendation came from the sister in Deep, the mother of Narsingh Mandal. It became difficult to cut across the opinion of the women's group within the family. His mother's marriage was settled.

Before reaching the age of thirty-five, she became a widow. After the death of her husband, she lived for nearly sixty years. In those sixty years, she saw a respectable family from her parental side uprooted and ruined. Mansara village was devastated by the Kosi and the Kamala. The Kamala now flows through the middle of the old settlement. She saw all three nephews and both grandsons imprisoned for one year each. She saw her widowed aunt, her widowed elder sister and younger sister, and accepted her own widowhood as well. She saw her brother Narsingh wounded by a bullet. Not only that, she also saw the ruined household of her sister's son's family at Harinahi. It is the blows of life that strengthen the grip of the hand.

With the destruction of Mansara, the relationship among

Deep, Godhanpur, and Berma grew still stronger, for all three were connected with one family. A family has two threads: one of lineage, the other of conduct and lived relationship. Living together, or living apart, certainly affects relations. Between Narsingh Mandal's family and the family of Berma, a maternal bond was formed. When Narsingh Mandal was shot, he stayed in Berma for many days during his treatment.

After his mother's death, the question of shraddha stood before Jagdish Prasad Mandalji. The situation was not good, but society had already overcome this problem, and therefore it did not appear to him to be so difficult. Yet two questions did arise in his own mind, though he did not speak of them. The reason was clear. This was not a wedding feast with laughter and prestige; it was a matter involving thirty or forty thousand rupees.

The question was whether, by feeding once those who had eaten and those who had not, relations would simply be broken off. To feed people to their fill and then allow them to rob the house day and night was not right. Yet there was also the fear that there is no shortage of those who sit cross-legged at another's place, but when their own turn comes, behave differently.

The second thought kept dancing in his mind: the rituals had been removed, but the burden of the feast had remained. On one side, he felt that if one fed people once and sounded the call, at least this much would happen: the panchs of five villages and the society would see everything with their own eyes. Yet he said nothing.

Then the cloud that had not yet opened suddenly thundered. On the thirteenth day, after the sara had been prepared, talk of the shraddha arose. Jagdish Prasad Mandal's paternal cousin, Gonor Mandal, came from Harinahi to Berma and placed his proposal: his aunt had raised him like a son, and therefore he would arrange the feast. Eight years earlier, he had also taken her to Gaya. His own condition was not very good, but the sons of his younger brother, all five of them, were earning, and he had that support. By repeatedly telling his nephew, Bilat Mandal, the story of his father's illness, he had already prepared him for arranging the feast. The nephews agreed.

Just as fish move in a pond by following one another's

course, seeing the course taken by the brother, that is, Jagdish Prasad Mandalji's elder brother, who had already died, the sister-in-law's family also made its move and said that whatever he, the paternal cousin Gonor Mandal, would do, they too would do the same. The reason was that her two sons, Rajdev Mandal and Ramanand Mandal, had begun working in Delhi.

When Jagdish Prasad Mandal calculated the matter, he saw that two feasts had been held in the five-village circle, and in each, thirty to thirty-five thousand rupees had been spent on food and drink, and another thirty to thirty-five thousand on rituals and ceremonies. In his own calculation, he reduced it by half.

A new illness had also taken hold of village feasts: the sweet feast had become a rasgulla feast. If the mind turned towards the feast itself, it began to wander. He felt that he might be caught in unnecessary trouble. A feast is an affair that can easily bring disrepute. The mistake of the cook or the server falls upon the person who gives the feast.

Along with this, another thought also kept rising in his mind: the present five-village circle had been formed only recently. How many of them had he eaten with? He had eaten feasts in Nanaur, in Laksena, in Parsa, and in other villages. But now those relations had split and gone one way, while Jagdish Prasad Mandal and his people had gone another way.

When he looked at his own capacity, it seemed to him that one-fourth would be enough. He arranged a simple rice-and-dal feast. Just as he had once arranged for brothers and kinsmen at the story gathering Sagar Rati Deep Jaray, he arranged the feast in the same manner, and it earned good appreciation. After feeding people that feast, he gave up eating ceremonial feasts himself.

After his mother's death, deaths began to come in succession, as pots crowd into a potter's kiln. Within a short time, his mother-in-law died. She too was nearly ninety years old. That feast also he kept small. Small in this sense: the shraddha of the mother-in-law was to be performed among three brothers and one sister. The eldest brother was in government service, and therefore had the pull and pressure of official life. Disagreement with his wife was bound to arise. Yet things were set right.

Since her parental home was nearby, his wife had gone there before her mother's last breath and remained there throughout the shraddha period. Jagdish Prasad Mandal ignored the matter. But a message came from the in-laws' side that nearly one hundred or one hundred and twenty-five people had gone for the funeral wood and cremation, and whether that expense would fall upon him. Hearing this, he ignored it.

When eight days had passed and the nail-and-hair ritual was to be held the day after tomorrow, he sent word: "You people perform the mourning feast on the nail-and-hair day. We in Berma have given up that practice. Now you tell me, would it be proper for me to come?" A great commotion arose, but how much commotion could take place in only two days? He let it pass.

He had hardly forgotten the in-laws' death when Narsingh Mama, who was about eighty or eighty-five years old, died. But in Deep, even a large feast becomes small. The village is so large that in feeding the entire village, the giver of the feast is exhausted. But in another village, even if there is only one household, it is still counted as a village.

By some good fortune, about eight years before his death, Narsingh Mandal had received recognition as a freedom fighter. With that, he had bought two to two and a half bighas of land. Before receiving the freedom-fighter's pension, he had begun working in the village at one man's house. After the pension came, he left that work.

In the same line, his wife's maternal uncle, that is, Jagdish Prasad Mandalji's wife's mother's brother, also died. He too had crossed the age of eighty. But since there had been no regular coming and going from that side, no burden fell upon Jagdish Prasad Mandalji.

In this way, one generation, the old generation, came to an end.

By the time 1999 arrived, Jagdish Prasad Mandal's life had begun to enter a transitional state between hope and despair. In 1998, he had been convicted in the case under Section 307. It took twenty to twenty-five days to file the appeal in the High Court. During that time, he was in Rampatti Jail. Inwardly, he felt

astonished that, without having done anything, he was in jail. Even then, and even now, his mind could not accept that any fault had been committed by him.

Be that as it may, the appeal was filed and he was granted bail. He telephoned Vermaji, Honourable Justice Virendra Prasad Verma of the Patna High Court, and Vermaji told him, "Nothing will happen. Do your work peacefully." And that is what happened. He came to know four months later that the case had ended. The reason for the delay was that the responsibility of pursuing the case had not remained with him.

When the number of cases had become very large, Jagdish Prasad Mandalji decided within himself that the responsibility for each case should be taken by one person among them. When the case opened and expenses increased, they would collect contributions. Until then, one case would remain under the charge of one person.

The expenses of the High Court case under Section 307, up to the judgement, had already been collected earlier. Therefore, he could not know its progress properly. In the other case that remained, there had already been talk of compromise. Even so, some people did create confusion and play their own game. Thus, the anxiety of the cases had almost gone out of his mind.

In fact, after three years of warrant, he came to know of the case only when information came from the police station. In the shifting of courts between Jhanjharpur and Madhubani, the case had been lost. After the Fast Track Court opened, when search and enquiry were made, it was found. By then, some among the twenty-eight accused had died, including three accused and two witnesses. The organisation too had scattered like a broken flock of birds. There were many reasons for this: social, economic, communal, and others.

Just as it was the last case, society too used its last weapon fully. But whatever happened, that too came to an end on 5 May 2005. Until then, Jagdish Prasad Mandal did not feel it proper to move in another direction. Those who gave advice would, of course, say that he was troubling himself unnecessarily. But what is the worth of a Simaria panda's advice? Whether the stream is the

Ganga and the ghat of thought is Simaria, or something else, is seen within the same current. One bank to the north, another to the south, is Magadh.

From the very beginning, Jagdish Prasad Mandal had the desire to see a new tomorrow. This was not merely so; after action, after lived struggle, it became still stronger.

For example, in a family where only ordinary education had entered, he studied up to M.A. Not only in the family, he became the first M.A. in the village itself. In the earlier generation, through Sanskrit learning, one scholar after another had emerged in Berma; but in general modern education, Jagdish Prasad Mandal alone stood there.

Secondly, after getting a boring installed, a newness also came into agriculture in the village. Mandalji practised both kinds of farming. By both kinds is meant food-grain cultivation as well as cash-crop cultivation. In cash crops, he began growing vegetables and fruits too. Of course, it could not take the form he wished it to take. The reasons were partly lack of time and partly disturbance. The destruction and damage to cultivation were such that, had he begun fighting over it, there would have been quarrels three times a day.

Before great problems, small ones become secondary. Yet these small blows did become weapons for breaking the mind. Wherever disturbance may arise, it certainly affects the mind. And this was the destruction of cultivation, where labour, capital, and time were all lost together.

The incident of the day when judgement was delivered in the Section 307 case at the Madhubani court and Jagdish Prasad Mandal was sentenced may be remembered. All the visible opponents in the village knew that he would be convicted and would go to jail. Once he went, they thought, he would hardly come out before ten years. He was sentenced and went to jail.

At that time, in three kathas of irrigated four-month land, he had planted cabbage. Yes, one more thing should be said here: from 1970-71 to 1986-87, agriculture in Berma continued to move forward. Many pump-sets and borings were installed. Flour mills, threshers, and other such machines also came. But the flood and

earthquake of 1986-87 pushed agriculture back.

On the one hand, after the flood and earthquake, the pull of government rations had already set in; on the other, many borings went under the soil, broke, and became useless. The village's agriculture slipped backwards. But farming was his livelihood. How could he leave it?

Be that as it may, on the day the judgement in the Section 307 case came, the cabbages in his field had heads weighing from two to four kilograms, and there were eighteen hundred plants. The price of cabbage was between two and five rupees a kilogram. One may estimate what kind of loss he suffered. All eighteen hundred plants were uprooted and carried away in broad daylight.

Secondly, three months after coming out of jail, he went to Kachhubi. In the northern hamlet of Kachhubi, a tea-shop keeper, who had come from Bishaul and settled there, behaved with him at the tea shop as though he had committed some grave crime and come out of jail. And this from a man who himself had no settled standing. What could be done?

With the family of Kali Babu, Kali Kant Jha, I.P.S., the jewel of Kachhubi, he had relations of eating, drinking, and regular coming and going. Until now, only two persons from Kachhubi have entered the I.P.S., and among them Kali Babu was the first. Even in his student life, he had become a platform speaker, and he sat more often on the platform of the Gita, giving discourses on the Gita.

Politics too came to a halt. After 1960, the main movement of the Communist Party in Madhubani district became centred on the Kosi Canal, Nunthar, Shishapani, and the Barahkshetra Dam. Other issues were, of course, also present. The struggle for sharecropping land was still strong. But a feeling had grown among the people as though canal water and hydroelectricity belonged only to the Communist Party.

Had these questions been solved, Mithilanchal would have been redeemed. It would have moved forward from agriculture to industry. But that did not happen. All the anti-Communist forces, through movements and conspiracies of many kinds, did not allow the plan to succeed even till now. Stagnation came into party

politics too. Not only that, even those who had received sharecropping land began mortgaging those very fields and going away to Punjab and Delhi. The result began to appear as if nothing at all had been done. This was not only the condition of district politics; the same happened in the village too.

A thought arose in Jagdish Prasad Mandalji's mind that even a tree thousands of years old keeps bringing some newness into itself: a new shoot, a new head, a new leaf, or a new bud. The thought did arise, but the two cases were still there in his mind. The problem was not merely going and coming for the cases; the problem was the possibility of punishment. Both were sessions cases. They were not matters of two days or four days, so that one could say he had gone to jail as though on a visit. It could mean years, ten years, twelve years. Together, the two could exceed twenty years. What was to be done in the meantime? Until he obtained freedom from the cases, it would not be proper to move in another direction.

And after freedom from the cases, what would he do? For livelihood, he was already farming. His mind had never turned towards a job, and he would not have been able to do business. Yet life is not a small thing. It is not a wooden-pedalled bicycle that, when faced with mud, slush, or a broken road, one may lift on one's shoulder and cross over. It is the vehicle of life. It has to be brought from one track to another.

This does not mean that wherever the track can be cut, one should take the vehicle there and place it on another line. To bring it to another track means to move it from a narrow-gauge line to a broad-gauge line. Its frame may be small, but by changing some parts, axle, and wheels, the carriage and other things can be made useful. The question does not end there; it goes further. This vehicle of life has been coming from the beginning of time. As many kinds of tracks as there are, so many kinds of movement belong to those tracks. To take the vehicle from one track to another is not easy.

The condition and direction of the literary world too are not hidden. There too, things have fallen into the hands of the mean-minded. To refuse something when it is asked for and hide it away is meanness. The world of Maithili literature has moved so far

away from society that joining the two again is not easy.

Of course, this is not true of Maithili alone; it is present in abundance in other literatures too. For example, Kabir Das is not discussed much in Maithili literature, but even the history of Kabir Das's life, his way of living, that has been presented elsewhere does not appear to be sufficiently discerning. Because of this lack of discernment, Kabir's philosophy has moved away from society. Those who are spreading that philosophy today are either themselves misguided, or they are mean-minded people who are misleading others.

In the same way, Tulsidas is called "Goswami", but how many cows did he actually keep? What is needed is the creation of literature according to the age.

Similarly, until Maithili literature becomes the literature of society, a social possession, how will anyone understand who is saying what to whom? Therefore, it becomes the responsibility of well-wishing writers that when they keep one eye on society and the other on pen and paper, not only Maithili literature but Mithila itself will benefit. If by "state" we understand only an office in the capital, then Mithila's society is left out. The social system of Mithila will achieve all-round development only when it moves forward on the basis of the Vedic order of life. ❑

A MEMORY FROM HIGH SCHOOL

☰

Jagdish Prasad Mandalji had enrolled at Kejriwal High School. During that period, the syllabus of Special Ninth, under the Higher Secondary system, was expanded. Even so, the subjects did not become like Honours courses; they remained compressed within the old secondary pattern. Yet the range of subjects certainly widened. Economics too was taught.

After the first six months of the Higher Secondary course, the half-yearly examination was held. Kejriwal School had a practice of returning the answer scripts of the half-yearly examination to the students. Some students, after the examination, would reread the answers to the questions; those who did not do so would at least compare their answers with the books at home. There was no ill-feeling among the teachers, nor did students feel that a teacher had acted with caste bias or unfairness.

Not only that, Latti Babu, the late Yadunandan Sahu, had a distinct way of thinking. His criterion for giving marks was different. He believed that if a student was given fewer marks, he would work harder, because every student studied with the desire to pass. The fear of failure would remain before him. Along with this, everyone, from teacher to student, understood that if even twenty per cent marks came from Latti Babu's hand, the student would certainly pass in the Board examination.

Yes, I was speaking of Economics. In Special Ninth, Jagdish Prasad Mandal secured more than fifty per cent marks in

Economics, more than in any other subject. When Shyam Babu, the late Shyamanand Jha, read out the marks loudly in class and returned the answer script, Economics gripped his mind in such a way that, later, it led him from Das Kapital to Amartya Sen.

After passing Higher Secondary, however, the two subjects closest to his heart, Economics and Geography, went away from his formal study, though they never left his mind. The subjects narrowed down to English, Hindi, and Political Science. In M.A. too, that range narrowed further.

The question arises: one person is a specialist in one subject, another is multidisciplinary. Between the two, whose vehicle of life will move in a more balanced way?

Jagdish Prasad Mandalji could not understand the death of the twentieth century and the birth of the twenty-first. He remained caught in thought, wondering what to do and what not to do. He could neither perform the shraddha of the twentieth century, nor celebrate the birth of the twenty-first. Yet one benefit certainly came to him: the expense of both the shraddha and the birthday was saved.

The five-year election system arrived. The mind that had become dull opened like a winter-chilled bumblebee in the warmth of spring. From the panchayat to the district council, Jagdish Prasad Mandalji wished to prepare a plan and make society stand on its feet. The district council election covered eight panchayats. Before going into other sections of society, he felt it necessary to strengthen his own.

The anchal conference was held at the school in Gangapur. A programme for the panchayat election was prepared. He placed the Berma plan before the gathering. It was accepted by all. But not one, many political threads became entangled in it. As a result, in four district council seats and four panchayats for the post of mukhiya, party candidates of the Communist Party stood in the field. Be that as it may.

He lost the panchayat election for the post of mukhiya. Throughout the election there had been enthusiasm, but in the process he came to understand many things, from society to the district party.

On one side, when he looked at the government scheme of reservation in elections, he felt that he had become unnecessarily entangled in this electoral affair. The method of reservation was such that the road from one election to the next would be blocked. Under fifty per cent reservation for women, there should have been one term each. But that did not happen. If elections are held for two terms at a time, how long will it take for the full cycle to be completed?

Be that as it may, government plunder certainly increased. The speed with which society should have stood up and begun to move has not yet arrived. Among many causes, corruption has become the chief one. The corrupt are of such a kind that the government itself belongs to them. Who will expose whom? And even if someone does expose them, what will the law do? Society has become trapped in a strange great net.

The common man faces economic distress. How will that be met? The method of meeting it has become such that even while grazing, the cow itself gets sold. On top of that, what is visible and what is stolen are entirely separate matters.

The very person for whom Jagdish Prasad Mandalji had spent eighteen days in jail came forward and stood in the election. He remembered the episode from the Mahabharata that took place after the war. Not the slightest doubt arose in his mind. Rather, the opposite happened. When he looked back, he realised that he would not find a better opportunity than this to remove the load that had been lying on his head until then. That is what he did. Yet one question still remained: should he clear it from the front, from the back, from both sides, or all at once?

He decided to clear it from the front. The coincidence too was good. At Basopatti in Madhubani district, the state conference of the party, the C.P.I., was held. Along with the party's General Secretary, Bardhan Sahib, A. B. Bardhan, comrades from Bengal were also present. Comrades from all districts of Bihar were, of course, there as well. It was a good conference. As a worker of the district party, Jagdish Prasad Mandal was naturally present. There were also many lovers of literature from the state party.

Jagdish Prasad Mandalji told them:

"Now I am coming to join you people." ❑

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF WORKS BY SHRI JAGDISH PRASAD MANDAL

☰

Hira Kaka had arrived in Bombay five days earlier, but no one from the village, the household, or any relative had come to meet him. Everyone has his own ❑

PUBLISHED WORKS OF SHRI JAGDISH PRASAD MANDAL

☰

Hira Kaka had arrived in Bombay five days earlier, but no one from the village, the household, or any relative had come to meet him. Everyone has his own ❑

BOOKS ON SHRI JAGDISH PRASAD MANDAL

☰

Hira Kaka had arrived in Bombay five days earlier, but no one from the village, the household, or any relative had come to meet him. Everyone has his own ❑

❑❑❑
❑❑
❑

Notes

JAGDISH PRASAD MANDAL-
MAITHILI WRITER

(Poet, Novelist and Short-Story Writer)

Gajendra Thakur

VIDEHA: MAITHILI LITERATURE MOVEMENT

विदेह मैथिली साहित्य आन्दोलन: मानुषीमिह संस्कृताम्

JAGDISH PRASAD MANDAL- MAITHILI WRITER
Gajendra Thakur
Pallavi Prakashan

JAGDISH PRASAD MANDAL: MAITHILI WRITER

(Poet, Novelist and Short-Story Writer)

Era Before and After- Literary Scene in Maithili after the Arrival of Jagdish Prasad Mandal

JAGDISH PRASAD MANDAL

Maithili Writer

Gajendra Thakur

बेरमा/निर्मली

JAGDISH PRASAD MANDAL- Maithili Writer
Jagdish Prasad Mandal- Maithili Writer (Poet, Novelist and Short-Story Writer), (Language English), by Gajendra Thakur

Published by : Pallavi Parkashan
Tulsi Bhawan, J.L. Nehru Marg, Ward No. 06, Nirmali, District-Supaul, Bihar : 847452

website : http://pallavipublication.blogspot.com
e-mail : pallavi.publication.nirmali@gmail.com
Mobile : 6200635563, 9931654742

Printed By : Manav Arts, Nirmali (Supaul)
Font source : https://fonts.google.com/,
https://github.com/virtualvinodh/aksharamukha-fonts

© Smt. Preeti Thakur
First edition : 2023
ISBN : 978-93-93135-41-4

All rights reserved. No Part of this publication may be reproductd or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without prior permission of the author.

Do not judge each day by the harvest you reap but by the seeds that you plant- Robert Louis Stevenson

……

……

Videha: Maithili Literature Movement

CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2
JAGDISH PRASAD MANDAL: MAITHILI WRITER (POET, NOVELIST AND SHORT-STORY WRITER)

CHAPTER 3
JAGDISH PRASAD MANDAL: THE PLAYWRIGHT

CHAPTER 4
FIVE SHORT STORIES BY SH. JAGDISH PRASAD MANDAL

CHAPTER 5
VERSE WRITING- JAGDISH PRASAD MANDAL

CHAPTER 6
THE EPILOGUE: ERA BEFORE AND AFTER: LITERARY SCENE IN MAITHILI AFTER THE ARRIVAL OF JAGDISH PRASAD MANDAL

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Parallel Literature in Maithili and Videha Maithili Literature Movement

---

T.K. Oommen writes in the "Linguistic Diversity" Chapter of "Sociology", 1988, page 291, National Law School of India University/ Bar Council of India Trust book: "... the Maithili region is found to be economically and culturally dominated by Brahmins and if a separate Maithili State is formed, they may easily get entrenched as the political elite also. This may not be to the liking and advantage of several other castes, the traditionally entrenched or currently ascendant castes. Therefore, in all possibility the latter groups may oppose the formation of a separate Maithili state although they also belong to the Maithili speech community. This type of opposition adversely affects the development of several languages."

T.K. Oomen further writes: "... even when a language is pronounced to be distinct from Hindi, it may be treated as a

dialect of Hindi. For example, both Grierson who undertook the classic linguistic survey of India and S. K. Chatterjee, the national professor of linguistics, stated that Maithili is a distinct language. But yet it is treated as a dialect of Hindi". (Ibid, page 293)

Parallel Literature in Maithili and Videha Maithili Literature Movement

HONOUR KILLING OF GANGESH UPADHYAYA (FIRST BY RAMANATH JHA, THEN BY UDAYANATH JHA 'ASHOK' *(A PARALLEL HISTORY OF MITHILA AND MAITHILI LITERATURE, WHY TODAY ITS NEED BEING FELT MORE INTENSELY?)*

I was not surprised, though I must have been when I saw a monograph on Gangesh Upadhyaya, whose copyright is being held by Sahitya Akademi, the author of the monograph is Udayanath Jha ' Ashok'. I thought that Udayanath Jha ' Ashok', who has been given Bhasha Samman also, by the same Sahitya Akademi, would do some justice. But truth and research seem elusive in Sahitya Akademi monographs, at least that I found in this monograph.

I searched and searched through chapters, that now the author will show courage. But the author like Ramanath Jha seems ashamed of the roots and offspring of Gangesh Upadhyaya. He tries to confuse the issue, but there is no confusion now at least since 2009. But in 2016 Sahitya Akademi seems to carry out the casteist agenda. Udayanath Jha mockingly pretends to search his name, lineage etc, where nothing is there to search for, yet he

could not muster the courage, to tell the truth, and ends up just repeating the facts in 2016 that Dineshchandra Bhattacharya already has published way back in 1958.

The honour killing of Gangesh Upadhyaya by Prof. Ramanath Jha is being taken forward by Sahitya Akademi, Delhi in a most hypocritical way.

Ramanath Jha's obscurantism vis-a-vis Panji is evident from one example. The inter-caste marriage in Panji was well known to him (but he chose to keep the Dooshan Panji secret- which has been released by us in 2009), and it was apparent that the great navya-nyaya philosopher Gangesh Upadhyaya married a "Charmkarini" and was born five years after the death of his father (see our Panji Books Vol I & II available at http://videha.co.in/pothi.htm). Sh. Dinesh Chandra Bhattacharya writes in the "History of Navya-Nyaya in Mithila". (1958)

"The family which was inferior in social status is now extinct in Mithila----- Gangesha's family is completely ignored and we are not expected to know even his father's name-----...As there is no other reference to Gangesa we can assume that the family dwindled into insignificance again and became extinct soon after his son's death." [1958, Chapter III pages 96-99), which is a total falsehood. He writes further that all this information was given to him by Prof. R. Jha, and he seemed thankful to him.

The following excerpt from Our Panji Prabandh (parts I&II) is being reproduced below for ready reference:

महाराज हरसिंहदेव- मिथिलाक कर्णाट वंशक। ज्योतिरीश्वर ठाकुरक वर्ण-रत्नाकरमे हरसिंहदेव नायक आकि राजा छलाह। 1294 ई. मे जन्म आ 1307 ई. मे राजसिंहासन। घियासुद्दीन तुगलकसँ 1324-25 ई. मे हारिक बाद नेपाल पलायन। मिथिलाक पञ्जी-प्रबन्धक ब्राह्मण, कायस्थ आ क्षत्रिय मध्य आधिकारिक स्थापक, मैथिल ब्राह्मणक हेतु गुणाकर झा, कर्ण कायस्थक लेल शंकरदत्त, आ क्षत्रियक हेतु विजयदत्त एहि हेतु प्रथमतया नियुक्त भेलाह। हरसिंहदेवक प्रेरणासँ- आ ई हरसिंहदेव नान्यदेवक वंशज छलाह, जे नान्यदेव कार्णाट वंशक १००९ शाकेमे स्थापना केने रहथि- नन्दैद शुन्यं शशि शाक वर्षे (१०१९ शाके)... मिथिलाक पण्डित लोकनि शाके १२४८ तदनुसार १३२६ ई. मे पञ्जी-प्रबन्धक वर्तमान स्वरूपक प्रारम्भक निर्णय कएलन्हि। पुनः वर्तमान स्वरूपमे थोडे बुद्धि विलासी लोकनि मिथिलेश महाराज माधव सिंहसँ १७६० ई. मे आदेश करबाए पञ्जीकारसँ शाखा पुस्तकक प्रणयन करबओलन्हि। ओकर बाद पाँजिमे (कखनो काल वर्णित १६०० शाके माने १६७८ ई. वास्तवमे माधव सिंहक बादमे १८०० ई.क आसपास) श्रोत्रिय नामक एकटा नव ब्राह्मण उपजातिक मिथिलामे उत्पत्ति भेल।

So, the Srotriyas as a sub-caste arose around 1800 CE as per authentic panji files. Sh. Anshuman Pandey *[Gajendra Thakur of New Delhi provided me with digitized copies of the genealogical records of the Maithil Brahmins. The panjikara-s whose families have maintained these records for generations are often reluctant to allow others to pursue their records. It is a matter of 'intellectual property' to them. I was fortunate enough to receive a complete digitized set of panji records from Gajendra Thakur of New Delhi in 2007. [Recasting the Brahmin in Medieval*

Mithila: Origins of Caste Identity among the Maithil Brahmins of North Bihar by Anshuman Pandey, A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (History) in the University of Michigan 2014].

Later these Panji Manuscripts were uploaded to Videha Pothi at www.videha.co.in and google books in 2009).

The so-called Maharajas of Darbhanga were permanent settlement zamindars of Cornwallis, and there were so many in British India, but in Nepal there were none. In the annexure of our book (Panji Prabandh vol I&II), we have attached copies of genealogy-based upgradation orders (proof of upgradation for cash). So, before 1800 CE, there was no srotriya sub-caste in British India and there is no such sub-caste within Maithil Brahmins in Nepal part of Mithila even today. Srotriya before that referred to following some education stream in British India, in Nepal it still has that meaning.

ORIGINAL PANJI REFERENCES ARE PLACED BELOW:

DOOSHAN PANJI- THE BLACKBOOK

१८८/२	चर्मकारिणी	माण्डर	वभनियाम	छादन
तत्त्वचिंतामणि	छादनगंगेशक	नाँई	*रत्नाकरक-*	गंगेश

कारकगंगेश			*मातृक (अज्ञात)*	
	वल्लभा	भवाइ	माहेश्वर	
			जीवे	

२१//१० छादनसँ तत्व चिन्तामणि कारक जगद्गुरु गंगेश

छादनसँ तत्व चिन्तामणि कारक

गंगेशक वल्लभा चर्मकारिणी पितृ परोक्षे पञ्च वर्ष व्यतीते तत्व चिन्तामणि कारक गंगेशोत्पत्ति- **चर्मकारिणी मेधाक सन्तानक लागिमे छलन्हि**

छादन सँ तत्व चिन्तामणि कारक मōमō गंगेश

"तत्व चिन्तामणि कारक म. म. पा. गंगेशक विषयक लेख प्राचीन पञ्जीसँ उपलब्ध"।।

पितृ परोक्षे पंच वर्ष व्यतीते गंगेशोत्पत्तिः इति प्राचीन लेखनीयः कुत्रापि

देवानन्द पञ्जी ३९-२ छादनसँ जगदगुरू गुंरू गंगेश सुताय वभनियामसँ जयादित्य सुत साधुकर पत्नी

देवानन्द पञ्जी ३३९-३ जगदगुरू गंगेश सुत सुपन दौ भण्डारिसमसँ हरादित्य दौ.।। पुत्र सुताच गोरा जजिवाल सँ जीवे पत्नी ए सुत सन्दगहि भवेश्वर। अत्रस्थाने सुपनभ्रातृ हरिशर्म्म दारिति क्वचित् जजिवाल ग्राम

देवानन्द पञ्जी ३०=५ छादनसँ उपायकारक म.म. पा. वर्द्धमान सुताच खण्डवलासँ विश्वनाथ सुत शिवनाथ पत्नी गंगेश- म.म. वर्द्धमान/ सुपन/ हरिशर्म्म

Gangesh, the author of the Tattvachintamani, wrote one text equivalent to 12,000 texts. Now come to the fact mentioned in the Panji- it clearly states that Gangesh of Tattvachintamani was born five years after the death of his father and he married a tanner, so why did Ramanath Jha hide this from Dinesh Chandra Bhattacharya? Vardhamana, son of Gangesh, calls Gangesh sukavikairavakananenduh. But the conspiracy under which the poems of a famous scholar like Gangesh are not available today is clear from the example given above. Vasudev of Bengal was a classmate of Pakshadhar Mishra of Mithila, he came to study in Mithila, passed the shalaka examination and received the title of sarvabhaum. Vasudeva memorised the tattvachintamani of Gangesh and the nyayakusumanjali karika of Udayana. Pakshadhar and other Mithila teachers did not allow writing (copying) tattvachintamani. Raghunath Shiromani, a disciple of Vasudeva, took the right of certification after he defeated his guru Pakshadhar Mishra in a scriptural debate (shastrartha). The Navya Nyaya school was founded in Navadvipa by Vasudeva-Raghunath. Pakshadhar Mishra was a contemporary of Vidyapati (distinct from the Padavali writer who was of the pre-Jyotirishwar period) who wrote in Sanskrit and Avahatta. And the arrival of Mithila students of Bengal from Bengal stopped after Raghunath Shiromani. Gangesh Upadhyaya enjoyed 'param guru' as well as 'jagad guru' titles, the highest titles of the time and as per Panji only Vacaspati Mishra II was the other person who enjoyed the title of 'param guru'. The extinction of Navya-Nyaya School from Mithila, as described above, was a revenge of nature against the honour killing of Gangesh Upadhyaya and his family.

[Translation of the Maithili Short Story, 'Shabdashastram' (based on the true Panji records of Gangesh Upadhyaya) was done by

the author Gajendra Thakur himself: published as 'The Science of Words' Indian Literature Vol. 58, No. 2 (280) (March/April 2014), pp. 78-93 (16 pages) Published By: Sahitya Akademi]

3

Kamlanand Jha has written a book on Nagarjun (Maithili's Yatri) where he credits him with giving a new direction to Maithili literature. Chandradhar Sharma Guleri wrote 'Usne kaha tha', a marvellous short story in Hindi, the best one of its time. But his literary corpora is very little in quantity, so if anyone tried to give him credit for giving direction to Hindi short story writing would make himself a laughing stock. And Yatri's Maithili literary corpora is even thinner than Guleri's. Moreover, Rajkamal Chaudhary calls him of the medieval age (Rajkamal Monograph, Subhash Chandra Yadav, Page no 14). He wrote Chitra (25 poems). He wrote, rather hurriedly published his 'Patrahin Nagn Gachh' (44 poems) for Sahitya Akademi Award in Maithili, which he got in 1968. After that he stopped writing in Maithili, so how can he influence anybody when after getting the award one stops writing in that language? This is one example of his instability so far as his ideology is concerned. He became a Buddhist monk when he left for Sri Lanka and became a Brahmin again when he returned after a 2nd sacred thread ceremony performed in his village. This is another example of his instability so far as his ideology is concerned. Kamlanand Jha does not know Maithili literature. His comments should be exposed, as he tries to give a bad name to the great tradition of Maithili literature. There were mainstream writers, but there were writers of parallel tradition also (see below Annexures 1 &

2). He has confused the Sanskrit and Avahatt Vidyapati Thakkurah with the Padavali writer pre-Jyotirishwar Vidyapti. He should read the writing of Vijay Kumar Thakur, a leftist historian, who has given ample light on pre-Jyotirishwar Vidyapati. [My article on Vidyapati in Prabandh Nibandh Samalochna Vol.II (available in Videha Archive) covers all these, the logo of Videha is the photograph of Pre-Jyotirishwar Vidyapati, sketched by Panak Lal Mandal, recipient of Videha Samman for fine arts.]

Annexure 1

चन्दा झा (१८३१-१९०७), मूलनाम चन्द्रनाथ झा, ग्राम- पिण्डारुछ, दरभंगा। कवीश्वर, कविचन्द्र नामसँ विभूषित। ग्रिएर्सनकेँ मैथिलीक प्रसंगमे मुख्य सहायता केनिहार। कृति- मिथिला भाषा रामायण, गीति-सुधा, महेशवाणी संग्रह, चन्द्र पदावली, लक्ष्मीश्वर विलास, अहिल्याचरित आऽ विद्यापति रचित संस्कृत पुरुष-परीक्षाक गद्य-पद्यमय अनुवाद।

१

न्यायक भवन कचहरी नाम।

सभ अन्याय भरल तेहि ठाम॥

सत्य वचन विरले जन भाष।

सभ मन धनक हरन अभिलाष॥

कपट भरल कत कोटिक कोटि।

ककर न कर मर्यादा छोटि॥

भन कवि 'चन्द्र' कचहरी घूस।

सभ सहमत ककरा के दूस।

२

रतिया दिन दुरगतिया हे भोला!

गैया जगतक मैया हे भोला

कटय कसैया हाथ

हाकिम भेल निरदैया हे भोला

कतय लगायब माथ

बरसा नहि भेल सरसा हे भोला

अरसा कए गेल मेह

रतिया दिन दुरगतिया हे भोला

जन तन जिवन संदेह

मुखिया बड़ बड़ सुखिया हे भोला

अन्नबक दुखिया डोल

के सह कान कनखिया हे भोला

सुखिया बिरना टोल

३

अस्त्र शस्त्र रोक आब मामिलाक मारि।

भाइ भाइकेँ पढ़ैछ नित्य नित्य गारि॥

ठक्क लोक हक्क पाब साधु कैँ उजारि।

दैव जे ललाट लेख के सकैछ टारि?

चाही नहि धन, ललितवाम, पकवान जिलेबी,

मनोविनोदक हेतु अमरपति सदन न टेबी।

ई अन्तर अभिलाष हमर करुणामयि देवी

भक्ति भाव सँ सतत अहिंक पदपंकज सेवी॥

अन्न महग, डगमग अछि भारत, हयत कोना निस्तारा

उत्तर पश्चिम भूमि अगम्या पर्वत असह तुषारा।

धर्म-विरोधी सहसह करइछ, कुमत कथा विस्तारा

करथु कृपा जगजननी देवी महिसीवाली तारा॥

मिथिला की छलि की भय गेलि,

याज्ञवल्क्य मुनि, जनक नृपतिवर

ज्ञान भक्ति सौं गेलि।

वाचस्पति मिश्रादि जगद्गुरु

निर्जित बौद्ध झमेलि

से शारदा स्वर्ग जनि गेली

बढ़ल कुविद्या केलि।

वर्णाश्रम विधि ककरहु रुचि नहि

श्रुति श्रद्धाकेँ ठेलि

पूजा पाठ ध्यान वकमुद्रा

सभटा वंचन खेलि।

कह कविचन्द्र कचहरी भरिदिन

बहुत भोग कर जेलि,

कलह कराय धर्म धन नाशे

कलिक दरिद्रा चेलि।

४

मय केहन भेल घोर हे शिव!

गोधन विपति, धरम अवनति देखि कत हिय करब कठोर॥

साधु समाज राजसँ पीड़ित अति हरषित-चित चोर।

अकुलिन लोकेँ धरणि परिपूरित कुलिन समादर थोड़॥

धरम सुनीति प्रीति ककरहु नहि, खलहिक चलइछ जोर।

कन्द-मूल-फल सेहो अब दुरलभ अन्न गेल देशक ओर॥

किछु शुभ साधन बनि नहि पड़इछ थाकल मन, मति भोर।

कह कवि चन्द्र हमर दुख मेटत होयत कृपा शिव तोर॥

५

सुमरु सुमरु मन! शंकर समय भयंकर जानि।

ककर हृदय नहि कलुषित शासन कलि नृप पानि॥

केवल शिव करुणाकर सेवयित नहि जन हानि॥

भक्ति कल्पलति जानह परम परशमनि खानि॥

कतहु विषयमे न लागह त्यागह अनुचित मानि।

सुखसौँ अन्त विलसबह 'चन्द्र' चूड़ रजधानि॥

ANNEXURE 2

१

फतुरीलालक अकाली कविता/ अकाली कवित्त

फतूरीलालक फसली बर्ख १२८१ (१८७३-७४ ई. सन) सालक अकाली कविता

[ग्रियर्सन (मैथिली क्रेस्टोमैथी एण्ड वोकाबुलेरी)]

साल एकासिक वर्णन सुनू/ चौदिस पड़ल अकाल

भेल बरिसात खिन्न ऐ सालक/ कहाँ लगि वरनौँ हाल

रोहिणि आदि थीक बरिसातक/ जेहिँ एला तेहिँ गेला

म्रिगिसिरा मन पुरल मनोरथ/ दै झीसा किछु गेला

अरदड़ा आडम्बर भारी/ गरजत हैं चहु ओर

पुख रुख राखल धरती केर/ भेल बरखा केर ओर

पुनर्वसु थिक बड़ पुनीता/ ओहो बड़ा कसरेस

बिआ बिड़ारक जे किछु उपटल/ धनि बरिसल असरेस

मघा भेल मंगाहिआ कल्लर/ जगभरि के नै जान

पुरबा पूर पछ नै राखल/ ककरा करब बखान

उत्तरा आइ जाय घर बैसल/ सपतौं लै नै बून

हथिआ शृंग मुँड़ दै मूनल/ तनिकौं लागल घून

चितरा चित मित नै राखल/ ओहो भेल डाकू धाती

नाक रंगौलन्हि सभै नछत्तर/ दोम नुकौलन्हि खाती

जोतिष पढ़ि-पढ़ि जे जन ऐलाह/ साधि-साधि भूगोल

रेखागणित बीजसौँ ओआकिफ/ तनि कौँ कच्ची बोल

श्रीराम कृपागति ओहो ने जानथि/ जाहि कृपा सभ काज

पानिक प्रश्न कबौं जौं पुछिऐन्हि/ सेहो कहैत होइन्हि लाज

जेहिखन नदी नाल नै भरले/ तेहिखन रौदी सरती

बिना जले जग किछु नै उपजल/ दगध भेल छथि धरती

ते नर रौदीक आगम बूझल/ जे छल कृषि किसान

दैव बेपच्छ पच्छ नै राखल/ जड़ि कटौलक धान

कोदो मड़ुआ एको ने उपजल/ नै उपजल किछु साम

गम्भड़ी गद्दरि खेतहि सुखाएल/ भेल विधाता वाम

मर्तभुवनमे के कर रच्छा/ कहाँ जाइ कैँ भागि

सुखल पताल हाल नै ओतहुँ/ सगरहुँ लागल आगि

धृक जीवन ओइ नृपति इन्द्रकैँ/ जे रोकल गहि पानि

जीवा-जन्तु विकल पुहमीमे/ ताकैँ हो नै आनि

रवी-राय एको नै उपजल/ ने खेढ़ी औ चीन

घर-घर सोच करै नर-नारी/ दुरदिन भेल अब बीन

धनिक लोक सभ मनहि मगन छथि/ राखथि बहुतो ढेरि

हसोथि रुपैया घर कै राखथि/ महगी भेल अब सेर

केओ कुरथी खेत मासु बेसाहल/ जाहि कौड़ि छल अपना

कतेक जना हरिवासर ठानल/ भात बहुत कै सपना

कतेक जना मिलि जनेर बेसाहल/ निरधन बैसल तकइ

भेल धनन्तिरि दूइ फसिल जग/ राहड़ि आओर मकइ

काल पड़ल तिरहुतिमे भारी/ तैँ ई बहि गेल हावा

घर-घर मगन करै नर-नारी/ फाँकि मकइ केर लावा

मालिक और महाजन सभकेँ/ घर-घर ढेरी अन्न

लोक बुझाओन ओहो तकै छथि/ मूँह गरीबक सन

समै देखि बनिआँ सभ सनकल/ डरेँ लगौलक टट्टी

सुन्न दोकान सहरमे परि गेल/ सुन्न भेल सभ चट्टी

सूखल गात बात भौ लटपट/ कतेक बात अब सहना

नर नारी सभ सान तेआगल/ बिकरी भेल अब गहना

मँगटीका खूटी औ तड़की/ नकमुन्नी नै नाक

कटसरि बिछिआ औ झिमझिमिआँ/ बाजूबन्द औ बाक

चन्द्रहार, हैकल औ सिकड़ी/ और घमौरिक दाना

सूति, नवग्रह औ पचखँड़ी/ लशुनी भेल निदाना

तापर दर्बजात नै बचले/ करम भेल निखट्ट

तमघैल, अढ़ैआ औ पिकदानी/ नै तसला औ तटू

बाटी, बट्टा औ पनबट्टा/ भोजन करैक थारी

माधव सीहि सहित सोबरना/ नै बचले घर झाड़ी

धन संपति घर किछु नै बचले/ सभटा पड़ि गेल बंधक

तैओ भूख छुटल नै ककरो/ एहन पेट भेल खंधक

दैब अंश अबतरल कम्पनी/ जा पर राम सहाए

मिथिलापुर बूड़न जब लागय/ से सुनि पहुँचल धाए

खरिद अनाज जहाजहिँ बोझल/ भरती करि करि बोरा

सदर तिलंगा ओआ पर भरती/ और ओलाइति गोरा

हाजीपुरमे लाख हजारम/ कै लाखन हइ पटना

बाजितपुर सुलतानपुर गोला/ नै जानत हौँ केतना

गाड़ी, बैल, छकड़, ऊँट बिहारे/ उबहत हइ सभ दाना

मिसर कन्हैआ कैँ पोखरन मे/ पहिलुक अड़ी ठेकाना

श्री लक्ष्मीश्वर सिंह नृपति/ महाराज मिथिलेश

अचल राज दड़िभंगा/ श्रीपति हरहिं कलेश

गाड़ी बैल लाखन हजारन/ ताकैँ परे घड़ेर

पहिलुक गोला मधुबन, भौड़ा/ जफरा और अड़ेर

बेनीपट्टी, औ पचमहला/ कुम्हरौल औ कमतौल

हरिहरपुर, पिड़ारुछ बरनौं/ कारज केतेकाँ बरिऔल

बारि पोखरि, बिरसायर बरनौं/ पण्डौल को नै जान

नवहद, सरिसो ओ भटपुरा, ता सोँ दक्षिण उजान

झंझारपुर, महरैल, कन्हौली/ मधेपुर हइ खास

बेनीपुर, कमान, नरैहिओ/ बरनौं फूलपरास

झमना हइ जगजानित जगमे/ महथा और बछौर

दुहबी औ महिनाथपुर/ और जैनगर तक हइ दौर

बलदेबपुर औ ढंगा बरनौं/ मिरजापुर लघु हाट

सीबीपटी औ कपसीआ/ सदर गोला सौराठ

गुरबाकेँ परबरसी हाकिम/ कर तिरहुतमे आके

नै तो मरते कत नर नारी/ बाले बचे सुखा के

कत मुरदा गरदा मै मिलते/ असंख जीव चल जाता

सर समधी केँ संभा ने लम्भन/ नै बचते जलदाता

सभकेँ सभ उपछै भै गेल/ धुर पोखर औ सड़क

रहि गेल ब्राह्मण सोती पण्डित/ कायथ पछिमा ठाकुर फरक

केओ ओरसिअर नाम लिखाओल/ केओ मोहर्रिर भेँट

धर्म्मकार्यमे लुटथि रुपैआ/ तेँ भेल सभ केर भेँट

केओ जमानत दैकेँ बचलाह/ जिनका अमला नेही

ककरो मारि केँत पिठि तोड़ैन्हि/ उतरैन्हि जन्मक ठेही

ककरहुँ गारत गात सुखाओल/ बहुतो होअय चलाना

मातुपिता घर परिजन रोवय/ बाबू गेलाह जहलखाना

ककरहुँ घर भेल खानातलासी/ भेट मोहर्रिर घौंछ

केओ अदालतिमे डिड़िआइ छथि/ ककरहुँ उपरैन्हि मौंछ

एतना सुनि हाकिम रिसिआओल/ तैँ लागल जन ठीका

नाक रंगौलन्हि सभै मोहर्रिर/ लागल चूनक टीका

जोग, बिकौआ,लौकिक वंशक/ किरिआमंत सुकूल

गाछी, बाँस, बैल औ महिसि/ जगह कैल भकफूल

ताहि रुपैआ सौँ करा गजर/ लै कोरट सौँ रीन

तैँ कारन बहुतो घर झगड़ा/ भाइ भतीजा भीन

आए लाट बहादुर/ औ दड़िभंगा धाम

बाबू औ बबुआन सहित मिलि/ कीन्ह कुमैटी खान

.....

.....

.....

एह सभ संग बैठि कै/ जाय कुमैटी भेल

अजब कार सरकार के/ तिरहुत पहुँचल रेल

बाजितपुरसँ सड़क निकालै/ आये दौड़िह दौड़ी

हहेया गंडक पुल बन्हाए/ आए चौरही चौरी

धर्म्मधीर, बलबीर, कम्पनी/ जानत हइ जगदीशन

लछमी सागर के पोखरिमे/ ताहि कीन्ह इसटीसन

बड़ा लाट कलकत्तेवाले/ श्रीदुर्गा होए संग

आगरा के छोटा लाल बहादुर/ बैठे सभ एकरंग

जुटे कमिश्नर और कलट्टर/ बोलहिं बात नेअंट

एह पाचो इजलास पर बैठे/ संग जात ऐह जंट

खबरि गए अखबार मौँ/ मैथिल के एह हाल

सुनहु फिरंगी अवण दैकेँ/ मेटहु दुख के जाल

हुकुम दीन्ह दोउ लाट को/ सुनहु हमारे बैन

मदति करहु रेआआनको/ क्या बैठे हौ चैन

बड़ा लाट दोउ बीर उठाए/ साहेब औ जरनैल

मेजर मजिस्टर और कलट्टर/ संगजात करनैल

देस देससौँ अन्न मंगाओल/ दीन्ह सभनि के दाम

महामूँग, गहुम औ चाउर/ बजड़ा और बदाम

डोली, पटना औ भटसारे/ दीली औ अजमेर

आगरा और कान्हपुर ढाका/ जहाँ अन्न के ढेर

भए रमाना अन्न तिरहुतिमे/ लादि गाड़ी और बैल

गज, तुरंग, गदहा औ छकड़/ संग सिपाही छैल

छत्री औ पैठान मोगल सभ/ बाँकाबीर रजपूत

सोभा बरनि नजात हइ/ जैसे हनुमन्त दूत

आगे सफर ओ मैना/ पलटन वीर जमान

बरछी औ तरुआरि गहै/ कर गहै तीर कमान

चढ़ि तुरंग पर करै कवाइत/ जमादार होए संग

सोभा बरनि न जात हइ/ देखि तखनुक रंग

करत काम सभ धाममे/ टूट अट सभ लूट

ढाहि भीड़ गाछी सहित/ बान्धै सड़क औ पूल

जिले पटने औ भटसारे/ प्रगन्ना महिसौर

तहाँ बसहिँ एक सज्जन/ तेहि घर जा लक्ष्मी दौड़

श्री द्वारिका प्रशादित/ धर्म्मधीर बुद्धिमान

तहसीलदार कोरट के खासा/ जानहिं सकल जहान

बाबु इसरी प्रसाद दियौटी/ सो मधुबनमे आए

हुकुम दीन्ह सुपरनडेंटकेँ/ टोले टोले होए जाए

मन पँचा मनगर भै लिए/ बहुतो लिए खैरात

धन्य धन्य अंगरेज बहादुर/ सभकेँ जूटल गात

गरिब, गनी, गुरबा, करु जै, जै/ ब्राह्मण देत असीस

श्री रघुनाथ बढ़ै बदसाही/ गदी लाख बरीस

फतुर लाल कवि बरनत हैँ/ एह रौदी के हाल

गौरमिंट गौरनल बहादुर/ तिरहुति राखहिँ बहाल

२

राधाकृष्ण चौधरी (मिथिलाक इतिहास) (विदेह पेटारमे उपलब्ध)

"१७७० क अकाल मिथिलाक इतिहासमे अद्वितीय छल आ मिथिलाक जनसंख्या घटिकेँ एक दम्म कम्म भऽ गेल छल। १८७३-७४ मे पुनः एकटा ओहने अकाल मिथिलामे भेल छल जकर विवरण हमरा फतुरी लाल कविक अकाली कवित्तसँ भेटइयै, अकाली कवित्त अप्रकाशित अछि। अकालकेँ दूर करबाक हेतु आ मजूरकेँ रोजी देबाक हेतु ताहि काल रेलगाड़ीक योजना चलाओल गेल जकरा सम्बन्धमे फतुरीलाल लिखैत छथि-

'कम्पनी अजान जान कलनको बनाय शान।

पवन को छकाय मैदानमे धरायो है॥

छोड़त है अड़ादार बड़ा बीच धाय धाय।

सभेलोग हटाजात केताजात खड़ा है॥

तारकी अपारकार खबरि देत वार वार।

चेत गयो टिकसदार रेल की उवाई है॥

करत है अनोर शोर पीछे कत लगत छोर।

जोर की धमाक से मशीन की बड़ाई है॥

कम्पूसन पहरदार कोथी सब अजबदार।

कोइला भर करल कार धूआँसे उड़ायो है॥

बाजा एक बजन लाग हाथी अस।

पिकन लाग जैसा जो चढ़नदार वैसाधर पायो है॥

गंगाकेँ भरल धार उतरि गयो फतूर पार गाड़ीकी।

अजबकार कवित्त यह बनाया है॥' "

Pseudo-criticism in Maithili and the case of Kamalananda Jha

The title of Kamalanand Jha's book "Maithili Novel: Time, Society and Questions" (2021) is misleading. It is a collection of some syndicated so-called critical articles on some of his caste novelists. The 263-page book can only be sold in hardbound to libraries where it will rot. Here is a correction, a non-caste writer's work, i.e., Subhash Chandra Yadav's novel 'Gulo', has been dealt with by him in two lines, of course without reading it. I am presenting those two lines here for your entertainment. You must have read *Gulo*, if you haven't already, read it first because then you will have a more entertaining experience. Gulo is available on Videha Archive with the permission of Subhash Chandra Yadav at this link http://videha.co.in/pothi.htm.

"The weakness of the novel is the author's political bias. The partisanship towards a particular politics does not do justice to the work."

In a novel where politics is not remotely involved, there is no question of 'political bias and partisanship of a particular politics'. Dhumketu and Yatri used political bias or partisanship. Subhash Chandra Yadav's 'Vote' which came out in 2022 and is available with permission of Subhash Chandra Yadav on Videha Archive at this link http://videha.co.in/pothi.htm, is on politics but even there Subhashji's enchanting style obviates the need of any political bias... Read my book 'Nit Naval Subhash Chandra Yadav' which is available at this link http://videha.co.in/pothi.htm. On the other hand, Mr Kamlanand Jha sounds like a spokesperson of some political party or a casteist organisation rather than a literary critic. Kamalananda Jha's Brahministic bias against Subhash Chandra Yadav is an alarm bell. The parallel stream is conscious of how Kamalananda Jha takes the leftist stance to promote Brahminism and wants to sacrifice social justice. In his biodata, he proudly mentions the Maithili translation assignment bestowed on him by the Sahitya Akademi, and this assignment was allotted to him not on account of merit but solely on the ground of his caste title and in lieu of these deeds. For people like him, Maithili-related work is merely a line in their *curriculum vitae*, but it is a question of life and death for the people of the parallel stream. Why did I call Kamalananda Jha a pseudo-critic? Because he is a pseudo-critic. He writes: "After nearly a hundred years of journey, Gaurinath is credited with writing a dignified novel on the dreams, struggles and ironies of inter-caste marriage. So, did Kamalananda Jha take away this credit from Sushil? Is this the culmination of the arrogance of his Brahministic upbringing ("*Through my whims and fancies I can place some literature on*

top and can downgrade some to the bottom") or is this the evidence of his lack of study? Let me take you away from the selfish world of Kamalananda Jha, away from deception and disguise to the sincere world of Sushil's magical literature. Welcome to the world of Sushil's literature. Here is Sushil's 'Gambali' (1982) which is now available in the Videha Archive at the link http://videha.co.in/pothi.htm. In the first line of this novel, even before the novel begins, Sushil writes about the novel 'Gambali': "In support of widow marriage and inter-caste marriage" and here begins the novel. The death of a village woman and then the trouble ensues, who will cremate this village woman? Brahmin community or Yadav community of the village? Dinesh Kumar Mishra's 'Dui Patan Ke Bich Me' is a historical biography of the Kosi River. He has also written historical biographies of other rivers of Mithila like 'Bandini Mahananda,' 'Bagmati Ki Sadgati!', 'Dui Patan Ke Bich Me... (Story of the Kosi River)', Na Ghat Na Ghar, Kamla River, 'Bhutahi River and Technical Herbalism', The Kamla River and People on Collision Course, Bhutahi Balan- Story of a Ghost River and Engineering Witchcraft, Refugees of the Kosi Embankments. Pankaj Jha Parashar, a member of the Maithili Advisory Committee of the Sahitya Akademi, Delhi has plagiarised paragraph after paragraph from his books and has published a novel in Maithili in his name, which pseudo-critic Kamalananda Jha mentions as research of this thief author Pankaj Jha Parashar! Let me clarify here that both the thief writer and the pseudo-critic are in the Hindi department of Aligarh Muslim University. This research is done by Dinesh Kumar Mishra, who is a graduate of IIT, Kharagpur in Civil Engineering (in 1968) and M. Tech in Structural Engineering (in 1970) and is qualified for that research. In Hindi, the cut-off for admission is the lowest across universities, otherwise, Kamalananda Jha would have known that this research could be

done by a civil engineer only. The Hindi original and Maithili screenshots are attached below. Dinesh Kumar Mishra is not from Mithila, but he has authored the story of all the streams of Mithila. We are grateful to him, and the people of Mithila will remain indebted to him for this. This thief writer Pankaj Jha Parashar is a habitual offender. More than a decade ago he found a saviour in Mr Taranand Viyogi who wrote that he (thief writer Pankaj Jha Parashar) gets influenced involuntarily stole others' material in his works. Now he has found another saviour in Kamalananda Jha. The parallel stream is conscious of how Kamalananda Jha takes the leftist side to promote Brahminism and wants to sacrifice social justice. Communism has suffered a lot from people who became communists to escape the land ceiling.

All books by Dinesh Kumar Mishra are now available in the Videha Archive with his permission:

http://videha.co.in/pothi.htm

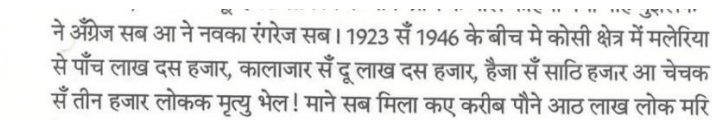
Let us recall here that when Bill Gates was asked whether he was delaying the introduction of the X-Box in India for fear of piracy. His answer was Microsoft never delays the launch of products for fear of piracy. We will continue enriching Videha Archive (http://www.videha.co.in/archive.htm), despite such risks because not all the fish in the pond rot by some rotten fish in parallel streams. The fishermen here have been and will continue to remove such rotten fish.

The final blow to syndicated pseudo-literary criticism in Maithili.

Original Dinesh Kumar Mishra (Dui Patan Ke Beech Me... 2006): It is noteworthy that between 1923 and 1946, 5,10,000

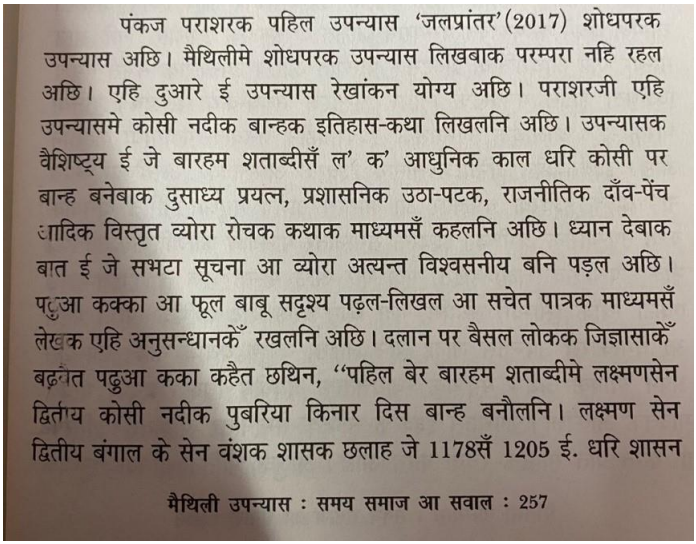
people died of malaria, 2,10,000 from Kala Azar, 60,000 of Cholera and 3,000 of smallpox in the Kosi region (783,000 total deaths).

Thief Pankaj Jha Parashar (Member of Maithili Advisory Committee of Sahitya Akademi, Delhi) [Jalpranthar 2017 (p. 103)]:


ने अँग्रेज सब आ ने नवका रंगरेज सब। 1923 सँ 1946 के बीच मे कोसी क्षेत्र में मलेरिया
से पाँच लाख दस हजार, कालाजार सँ दू लाख दस हजार, हैजा सँ साठि हजार आ चेचक
सँ तीन हजार लोकक मृत्यु भेल! माने सब मिला कए करीब पौने आठ लाख लोक मरि

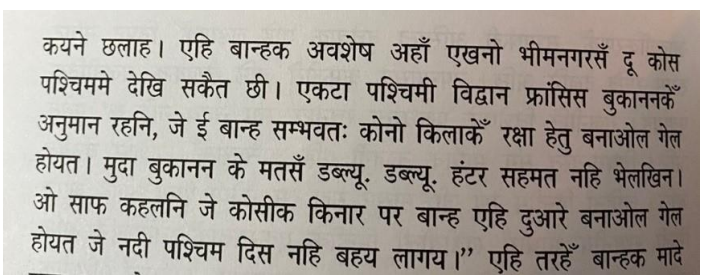
Original Dinesh Kumar Mishra (Dui Patan Ke Beech Me... 2006): On the Kosi River in Bihar, India, a dam was built by King Laxman II in the 12th century and for this, he received the title of 'Bir' from the people and the embankment of the river was called 'Bir Dam' The remains of this embankment are still visible in Supaul district, about 5 km south of Bhim Nagar. Dr Francis Buchanan (1810-11) speculated that the dam must have been an outer wall built to protect a fort as it stretched over a distance of 32 kilometres from Tilyuga to its confluence on the western bank of the Dhaus river. Dr W.W. Hunter (1877) did not agree with Buchanan's contention that the dam was the protective wall of a fort. Quoting locals, Hunter believed that most people did not consider it a fortress wall and according to him it was something else but he was not in a position to say anything. Yet the common impression is that it must have been an embankment built along the Kosi River to prevent the river's current from sliding westwards. People also said that it seemed that the construction of the embankment had suddenly stopped.

The pseudo-critic Kamalananda Jha's saviour of the habitual offender thief Pankaj Jha Parashar quoted the plagiarised work as follows: (**Maithili Novel, Time, Society and Questions pp. 257-258):**



पंकज पराशरक पहिल उपन्यास 'जलप्रांतर'(2017) शोधपरक उपन्यास अछि। मैथिलीमे शोधपरक उपन्यास लिखबाक परम्परा नहि रहल अछि। एहि दुआरे ई उपन्यास रेखांकन योग्य अछि। पराशरजी एहि उपन्यासमे कोसी नदीक बान्हक इतिहास-कथा लिखलनि अछि। उपन्यासक वैशिष्ट्य ई जे बारहम शताब्दीसँ ल' क' आधुनिक काल धरि कोसी पर बान्ह बनेबाक दुसाध्य प्रयत्न, प्रशासनिक उठा-पटक, राजनीतिक दाँव-पेंच आदिक विस्तृत व्योरा रोचक कथाक माध्यमसँ कहलनि अछि। ध्यान देबाक बात ई जे सभटा सूचना आ व्योरा अत्यन्त विश्वसनीय बनि पड़ल अछि। पढुआ कक्का आ फूल बाबू सदृश्य पढ़ल-लिखल आ सचेत पात्रक माध्यमसँ लेखक एहि अनुसन्धानकेँ रखलनि अछि। दलान पर बैसल लोकक जिज्ञासाकेँ बढ़ैत पढुआ कका कहैत छथिन, "पहिल बेर बारहम शताब्दीमे लक्ष्मणसेन द्वितीय कोसी नदीक पुबरिया किनार दिस बान्ह बनौलनि। लक्ष्मण सेन द्वितीय बंगाल के सेन वंशक शासक छलाह जे 1178सँ 1205 ई. धरि शासन

मैथिली उपन्यास : समय समाज आ सवाल : 257



कयने छलाह। एहि बान्हक अवशेष अहाँ एखनो भीमनगरसँ दू कोस पश्चिममे देखि सकैत छी। एकटा पश्चिमी विद्वान फ्रांसिस बुकाननकेँ अनुमान रहनि, जे ई बान्ह सम्भवतः कोनो किलाकेँ रक्षा हेतु बनाओल गेल होयत। मुदा बुकानन के मतसँ डब्ल्यू. डब्ल्यू. हंटर सहमत नहि भेलखिन। ओ साफ कहलनि जे कोसीक किनार पर बान्ह एहि दुआरे बनाओल गेल होयत जे नदी पश्चिम दिस नहि बहय लागय।" एहि तरहेँ बान्हक मादे

Thief Pankaj Jha Parashar (Member of Maithili Advisory Committee of Sahitya Akademi, Delhi) [Jalpranthar 2017 (p. 31)]:

पढ़ुआ कका पछिला गप कें आगाँ बढ़बैत कहलखिन, 'फूल बाबू, कोसी नदीक बेसिन प्राचीन काल सँ मनुक्खक निवास लेल उपयुक्त स्थान रहल अछि। बारहम-तेरहम सदी मे भारत मे जखन कइक टा नदी सुखा गेल, तँ ओहि ठामक पशुचारक समाजक लोक एतय आबि कए बसलाह। तहिये सँ बढ़ैत जनसंख्या आ कोसी नदीक बदलैत प्रवाहक मध्य टकराहटि होमय लागल। नदीक अनियंत्रित धारा कें लोक बाढ़ि बूझय लागल। पहिल बेर बारहम शताब्दी मे लक्ष्मणसेन द्वितीय कोसी नदीक पुबरिया किनार दिस बान्ह बनौलनि। लक्ष्मणसेन द्वितीय बंगाल के सेन वंशक शासक छलाह, जे 1178 सँ 1205 ईस्वी धरि शासन कयनें छलाह। एहि बान्हक अवशेष अहाँ एखनो भीमनगर सँ दू कोस पश्चिम मे देखि सकैत छी। एकटा पश्चिमी विद्वान फ्रांसिस बुकानन के अनुमान रहनि, जे ई बान्ह संभवत: कोनो किला के रक्षा हेतु बनाओल गेल होयत। मुदा बुकानन के मत सँ डब्लू. डब्लू. हंटर सहमत नहि भेलखिन। ओ साफ कहलखिन, जे कोसीक किनार पर बान्ह एहि दुआरे बनाओल गेल होयत, जे नदी पच्छिम दिस नहि बह' लागय।' पढ़ुआ कका सँ मुँहजबानी एतेक रास ऐतिहासिक तथ्य सुनियो कए फूल बाबू सहमति मे मूड़ी नहि डोलेलखिन। जाहि सँ ओतय बैसल लोक सबहक उत्सुकता और बढ़ि गेलनि, जे गप मे एहेन कोन तथ्य रहि गेलै जे फूल बाबू संतुष्ट नहि भेलखिन ? लोक कें बुझेलनि जे फूल बाबू शास्त्रार्थ के अखड़हा पर माटि फेकि रहल छथिन। पढ़ुआ कका कें आइ जोड़ीदार भेटि गेलनि!

जलप्रांतर / 31

Original Dinesh Kumar Mishra (Dui Patan Ke Beech Me... 2006): A glimpse of the horrors of the Kosi River can be seen in the event when the army of Feroz Shah Tughlaq returned to Delhi from Bengal. It is said that when the troops of the Sultan reached the banks of the Kosi, they saw that on the other side of the river, the troops of Haji Shamsuddin Ilyas were waiting, ready for a battle. This was the same Haji Shamsuddin who founded the cities of Hajipur and Samastipur. Feroze's troops were stranded on the banks of the Kosi somewhere around Kursela. The speed of the river was preventing them from moving forward. It was finally decided to proceed northward along the river and to locate the water where it was navigable. The troops of the Sultan went up about a hundred *kos* and crossed the river near Ziaran, situated at the same place where

the river descended from the mountains into the plains. The river was thin, but the flow was so fast that heavy stones weighing five hundred *manas* were floating like straws in the river. On either side of the river where it was found possible to cross it the Sultan erected a row of elephants, and ropes were hung in the bottom row so that if a man loses control he could be rescued with the help of these ropes. Shamsuddin never thought that Sultan's troops would be able to cross the Kosi and when he came to know that Sultan's troops had managed to cross the Kosi, he fled.

Thief Pankaj Jha Parashar (Member of Maithili Advisory Committee of Sahitya Akademi, Delhi) [Jalpranthar 2017 (p. 105)]:

'बेश, तँ सुनू। 1354 मे फिरोजशाह तुगलक के फौज जखन बंगाल सँ दिल्ली घुरि रहल छल, तँ कोसीक प्रवाह बहुत तेज छलै। तुगलकी सेना जखन कोसी के किनार पर पहुँचल, तँ कोसीक ओहि पार मे हाजी शम्सउद्दीन इलियास के सेना तुगलकी सेना सँ मोकाबला करबाक लेल अस्त्र-शस्त्र ल' कए तैयार छल। ई वएह हाजी शम्सउद्दीन छलाह, जे हाजीपुर आ समस्तीपुर नगर बसौनैं रहथि। फिरोजशाह तुगलक के सेना संभवतः कुरसेला के आस-पास कोसी के तेज धार देखि कए सोच मे पड़ि गेल। पानिक रफ्तार देखि कए तुगलकी सेना कैं नदी पार करबाक हिम्मत नहि भ' रहल छलै। अंततः तुगलकी सेनापति तय कयलनि, जे नदीक किनारे-किनार उत्तर दिस बढ़ल जाय। जतय जा कए नदीक पाट कनैं कम बूझि पड़य, ओतय पानिक थाह लेल जायत। एहि आशा मे फौज उत्तर दिस बढ़ैत रहल। कुरसेला सँ सय कोस आगाँ गेलाक बाद कोसी के पेट कनैं शिकस्त बुझेलै। कोसी ओतहि पहाड़ सँ नीचाँ उतरैत अछि। पानिक वेग के अनुमान एहि सँ कयल जा सकैए, जे पाँच-पाँच सय मनक पाथर कोसी मे खढ़ जकाँ बहि रहल छल। तुगलकी सेनापति कैं जतय नदी पार करब कनैं आसान बुझेलनि, ओतय एक लाइन मे सैकड़ों टा हाथी कैं ठाढ़ क' देल गेल। नीचाँ वला लाइन मे बड़का-बड़का रस्सा लटका देल गेल, जे जँ क्यो पानि मे भासि जायत, रस्सा के मदति सँ निकालि लेल जायत। एहि तरहेँ फिरोजशाह तुगलकक सेना कोसी पार क' गेल। हाजी शम्सउद्दीन सपनो मे नहि सोचनैं छल,जे तुगलकी सेना कोसी पार क' जायत। जखन हाजी शम्सउद्दीन कैं पता लगलै जे तुगलकी सेना कोसी पार क' चुकल अछि, तँ ओ डरे सँ पड़ा गेल। तँ एहि कोसीक तेज धार के ल' कए एतेक आत्मविश्वास मे छल हाजी शम्सउद्दीन।'

(More screenshots will be updated at this link http://www.videha.co.in/investigation.htm soon.)

1.2.Parallel Literature

The references to parallel literature are found in Vedas, where Narashanshi is referred to as parallel literature.

1.3.Parallel Literature in Maithili

The need for parallel literature in Maithili arose due to the constant onslaught on literature and dignity by the Public and Private Academies, for example, Maithili-Bhojpuri Akademi of Delhi, Maithili Akademi of Patna, Sahitya Akademi of Delhi, Nepal's Prajna Pratishthan, all of which are government Academies. In addition to these Academies, the onslaught on Maithili Literature and dignity was constantly done by the so-called literary associations which were recognised by the Sahitya Akademi and were the main tool for usurping all the literary space meant for this language. Besides these, the funding to these and other parochial associations and organisations led to the presentation of an interface in the name of Maithili, which was mediocre and non-representative.

1.4.The Book of Bihari Literature (Abhay K. Editor)

This book contains five translations from non-representative Maithili short stories into English by Vidyanand Jha. Nagarjuna (Maithili's Yatri) and Usha Kiran Khan are from the Hindi quota though both got the Sahitya Akademi prize from the Maithili quota. Vibha Rani and Rajkamal Chaudhary are from the Maithili quota though both wrote in Hindi also.

This book is edited by Abhay K. who has read Samskrit only up to high school. Yet he pretends to translate Arthashastra directly from Samskrit into English. I am Kovid in Samskrit and from the quality of the translation, I can presume that he has used some intermediary language in translating Samskrit texts into English. It is a matter of ethics to acknowledge the source.

Vidyanand Jha's translation is below par, for example, he has no inkling what would be the English word for 'olak sanna', and there are plenty of such instances. I have some suggestions for him: First, read A Bird's Eye View on Mithila by Rajnath Mishra, it mentions all the terms for which you could not find English equivalents. Then go to the Videha archive (www.videha.co.in) and look for Umesh Mandal's Picture Dictionary containing vegetation, animals and skill sets of Mithila, here you will find the actual photographs too. Further, under A Parallel History of Maithili Literature (Videha www.videha.co.in), you will find sample English translations of

some Maithili short stories. Therefore, what Vidyanand Jha is presenting as exotic is the original thing of the Maithili Language (but not that of Maithili literature, as was two decades ago). Interestingly his choice of short stories reminds me of Contemporary Maithili Short Stories (Maithili short stories translated into English) edited by Murari Madhusudan Thakur and published by the Sahitya Akademi in 2005. It seems that the stories in this selection are leftover material from that collection. Rip Van Winkle awoke after two decades but Vidyanand Jha is still in slumber not realizing the changes that have happened during the period.

If you compare the translation of this selection vis-a-vis the English translation of Latin American Spanish literature, you would be able to understand the difference.

But these types of selections are not known for their literary excellence, Harper Collins publishes these types of selections for five-star hotels and Airport lounges. The publishers announced this book on March 22, 2022. So, in 6-7 months, you will get old materials only.

1.5.The Bride: The Maithili Classic Kanyadan by Harimohan Jha (1908-1984) translated into English by Lalit Kumar (Assistant Professor, Department of English, Deen Dayal Upadhyaya College, University of Delhi)- Harper Perennial (Harper Collins Publishers)

I had pre-ordered the book, which was scheduled to be delivered to my kindle account on the 1st of December 2022, but the delivery date was postponed, and it was delivered to my account on the 14th of December 2022.

When Maithili was recognised by the Sahitya Akademi (National Academy of Letters- of India) way back in 1965, Late Ramanath Jha stated that his Maithili language is saved now (Maithilik Vartman Samasya, Ramanath Jha).

Sh. Harish Trivedi has committed the same mistake. In his foreword Harish Trivedi writes- "In Hindi, the language to which Maithili is the closest (and of which it was indeed an integral part until it was granted recognition as a separate language by the constitution in 1993) …."

Harish Trivedi refers to the inclusion of Maithili in the eighth schedule of the constitution of India. Here the year mentioned should be 2003 instead of 1993. Moreover, Maithili was a separate language in 2003, 1993, and 1965 and during the time of pre-Jyotirishwara Vidyapati. The status granted to Maithili by

Sahitya Akademi and the Constitution of India, on the other hand, strengthened the hands of the obscurantist elements like Ramanath Jha, Shardananda Jha (he is not a famous person but why I have taken his name, I will explain it later) and others who gaslighted Harimohan Jha. Harimohan Jha's Khattar Kakak Tarang, Pranamya Devata, Rangshala and Charchari all these books were eligible for the Sahitya Akademi Award initiated in 1966 for Maithili (because of recognition given to Maithili by Sahitya Akademi in 1965. But a philosophy treatise was awarded the prize in 1966, this philosophy book itself is a horrific one, and if one has read the book to understand the nuances of Indian Philosophy, then he will have to unlearn first to be able to grasp the philosophical concepts from a new book on Indian Philosophy. In 1967 no award was given for the Maithili Language.

Ramanath Jha's obscurantism vis-à-vis Panji is evident from one example (because Lalit Kumar also seems to have followed in his footstep, though he gives credit for his ignorance to some other writers). He was casteist, conservative and confused. The inter-caste marriage in Panji was well known to him (but he chose to keep the Dooshan Panji secret- which has been released by us on google books in 2009), and it was apparent that the great navya-nyaya philosopher Gangesh Upadhyaya married a "Charmkarini" and was born five years after the death of his father (see our Panji Books Vol I & II available at

http://videha.co.in/pothi.htm). Sh. Dinesh Chandra Bhattacharya writes in the "History of Navya-Nyaya in Mithila".

"The family which was inferior in social status is now extinct in Mithila- Gangesha's family is completely ignored and we are not expected to know even his father's name.", which is a total falsehood. He writes further that all this information was given to him by Prof. R. Jha. So how would this casteist-conservative-confused allow the award to be given to Sh Harimohan Jha? So, the Sahitya Akademi saved the Maithili Language by recognizing it, as asserted by Prof. R. Jha, is wrong and so is the assertion made by Sh. Harish Trivedi.

Mr Lalit Kumar is a young person, but he is being misused by some obscurantist elements, who gaslighted Harimohan Jha. Harimohan Jha stopped writing in Maithili following the recognition of it by Sahitya Akademi and was awarded the Sahitya Akademi prize for his autobiography in 1985, after his death, which means nothing.

Mr Lalit Kumar writes- “Yoganand Jha’s Bhalmanusha (1944) and Shardananda Jha’s Jayabara (1946) attack such social divisions that played a decisive role in marriages.” Yoganand Jha’s Bhalmanusha (1944) was indeed a pathbreaking novel, but Shardananda Jha’s novel was reactionary. Prof Radha Krishna Choudhary rightly observes- “Yoganand Jha’s ‘Bhalamanusa’ deals with the social problems connected with the problem of

marriage. As a reply to this novel, Shardanand Jha wrote a second-rate novel 'Jayabara,' having little literary merit. (RADHAKRISHNA CHOUDHARY A Survey of Maithili Literature)

Mr Lalit Kumar for his Panji-related ignorance gives credit to Mm. Parmeshwar Jha's ''Mithila Tattva-Vimarsha." Prof Radha Krishna Choudhary rightly observes- "Mm. Parmeshwar Jha's 'Mithila Tattva-Vimarsha' is the history of Mithila in Maithili prose and is based mainly on tradition. Mm. Mukunda Jha Bakshi's 'Mithilabhashamaya Itihas' gives an account of the Khandawala dynasty. From the point of view of modern Maithili prose, these two works are important, though from the historical point of view, are unreliable. (RADHAKRISHNA CHOUDHARY A Survey of Maithili Literature)

The following excerpt from Our Panji Prabandh (part I&II) is being reproduced below for ready-reference: -

महाराज हरसिंहदेव- मिथिलाक कर्णाट वंशक। ज्योतिरीश्वर ठाकुरक वर्ण-रत्नाकरमे हरसिंहदेव नायक आकि राजा छलाह। 1294 ई. मे जन्म आ 1307 ई. मे राजसिंहासन। घियासुद्दीन तुगलकसँ 1324-25 ई. मे हारिक बाद नेपाल पलायन। मिथिलाक पञ्जी-प्रबन्धक ब्राह्मण, कायस्थ आ क्षत्रिय मध्य आधिकारिक स्थापक, मैथिल ब्राह्मणक हेतु गुणाकर झा, कर्ण कायस्थक लेल शंकरदत्त, आ क्षत्रियक हेतु विजयदत्त एहि हेतु प्रथमतया नियुक्त भेलाह। हरसिंहदेवक प्रेरणासँ- आ ई हरसिंहदेव नान्यदेवक वंशज छलाह, जे नान्यदेव कार्णाट वंशक १००९ शाकेमे स्थापना केने रहथि- नन्दैद शुन्यं शशि शाक वर्षे

(१०१९ शाके)... मिथिलाक पण्डित लोकनि शाके १२४८ तदनुसार १३२६ ई. मे पञ्जी-प्रबन्धक वर्तमान स्वरूपक प्रारम्भक निर्णय कएलन्हि। पुनः वर्तमान स्वरूपमे थोडे बुद्धि विलासी लोकनि मिथिलेश महाराज माधव सिंहसँ १७६० ई. मे आदेश करबाए पञ्जीकारसँ शाखा पुस्तकक प्रणयन करबओलन्हि। ओकर बाद पाँजिमे (कखनो काल वर्णित १६०० शाके माने १६७८ ई. वास्तवमे माधव सिंहक बादमे १८०० ई.क आसपास) श्रोत्रिय नामक एकटा नव ब्राह्मण उपजातिक मिथिलामे उत्पत्ति भेल।
So, the Srotriyas as a sub-caste arose around 1800 CE as per authentic panji files.

Sh. Anshuman Pandey *[Gajendra Thakur of New Delhi provided me with digitized copies of the genealogical records of the Maithil Brahmins. The pañjīkara-s whose families have maintained these records for generations are often reluctant to allow others to pursue their records. It is a matter of 'intellectual property' to them. I was fortunate enough to receive a complete digitized set of pañjī records from Gajendra Thakur of New Delhi in 2007. [Recasting the Brahmin in Medieval Mithila: Origins of Caste Identity among the Maithil Brahmins of North Bihar by Anshuman Pandey, A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (History) in the University of Michigan 2014]*. Later these Panji Manuscripts were uploaded to google books in 2009).

The so-called Maharajas of Darbhanga were permanent settlement zamindars of Cornwallis, and there were so many in British India, but in Nepal there were none. In the annexure of

our book (Panji Prabandh vol I&II), we have attached copies of genealogy-based upgradation orders (proof of upgradation for cash). So, before 1800 CE, there was no srotriya sub-caste in British India and there is no such sub-caste within Maithil Brahmins in Nepal part of Mithila even today. Srotriya before that referred to following some education stream in British India, in Nepal it still has that meaning.

Mr Lalit Kumar further tries to put his agenda by writing – "Harimohan choose a middle ground in his reformist agenda." He gives laughable reasons for his contention viz. "he espouses the significance of local traditions, languages, scripts, education system, and moral values" thereby meaning that these are conservative values!

(All the referred books are available for free pdf download from the link http://videha.co.in/pothi.htm)

1.6. VIDEHA MAITHILI LITERATURE MOVEMENT AND A PARALLEL HISTORY OF MAITHILI LITERATURE

Therefore, the missing portions, the ignored and non-represented aspects of society, started to be chronicled. It led to the depiction marked by the richness of vocabulary and experiences and was a revolution in literature and art as far as people speaking Maithili are concerned. The quality now has not remained mediocre. The real power of the Maithili language was realised by the native speakers, mediocrity was replaced by excellence. This attempt at the writing of History of Parallel Literature for the Maithili Language arose as the mediocre agency (private and governmental) funded so-called mainstream literature, which has no readership, and no acceptance among the speakers of Maithili continued to be presented by these Academies as representative literature. The mediocre interface of Maithili literature was presented by the government radio and television stations also. Literary journals like Museindia (www.museindia.com) & Publishers like Harper Collins were also used for their sinister design. ❑

CHAPTER 2

JAGDISH PRASAD MANDAL (POET, NOVELIST AND SHORT-STORY WRITER)

SURVEY OF SOME BOOKS WRITTEN BY SHRI JAGDISH PRASAD MANDAL

SHAMBHUDAS

Jagdish Prasad Mandal injects into the minds of the readers the deity Barham Baba. He shows that both the devotees as well as Barham Baba himself are quite cheerful. He shows the convergence of "Shambhua" (disrespectful calling) into "Shambhu" (respectful calling). And then he sees Shambhudas changing to Darbaridas.

The crumbling institutions of Mithila and Shambhudas turned to rubble, which is proof that the arts practised in Mithila have been destroyed. But the main characters of his other short stories, like Bhaitak Lava or Bisarh, refused to crumble. So then why has Shambhudas become Darbaridas? Is it just a simple loss of power? Or is it a change in Jagdish Prasad Mandal, the writer, himself? Has he become tired; is he being defeated?

Looking closer we find that Shambhudas is not in any way inferior to the heroes and heroines of Bhaitak Lava or Bisarh. Then why is Shambhudas losing? Shouldn't he be winning? Why does the writer push him to defeat? He is the writer, he's God as far as the characters are concerned, why he is letting the

circumstances be such that Shambhudas finds himself in a losing position?

Jagdish Prasad Mandal's characters are not artificial ones. And that is why they do not always win on every economic front.

On the economic front, work is done through hands, through labour. But culture (including literature) is a very delicate handiwork. The characters of this story get entrenched in this handiwork.

When Jagdish Prasad Mandal's other characters had to fight on the economic front, they fought like anything, and they triumphed. But to serve the area of Art, Shambhudas had to migrate (unlike the characters of Bisarh).

So Shambhudas had to become a courtesan, a court artist. Economically it was thankless work. But doing this was the only way of true survival in these changing times, for it represented the survival of Art!

But here also, in what may still be seen as defeat (for economically, it was), Shambhudas unfurled a flag of revolt.

He decided not to marry. He decided to let go of the possibility of family life. Shambhudas became Darbaridas not for his economic survival. Indeed, he certainly is not a utilitarian, but he had to make the compromise for the sake of the survival of his Art. His decision not to marry was repentance for this compromise.

The parallel tradition will topple if Art becomes "Darbaridas". If Shambhudas loses it will be a loss for Mithila. It is not just Jagdish Prasad Mandal who will lose, it is the entirety of Mithila who will lose in his defeat.

Will Mithila heed this warning of Shambhudas?

BAJANTA-BUJHANTA

It is a collection of seed stories.

The title seed-story Bajanta-Bujhanta (trans. talking-understanding) is a story of a parrot, who is Bajanta-Bujhanta. In this collection of seed stories, there is more symbolism like these than in the writer's other stories.

In Chaukidari we see a labourer working even in the eighth month of her pregnancy, by tying a rope around her waist and stomach.

The story Pator he dedicates to the famous seed-story activist Manoj Kumar Karn (alias Munnaji), and he assigns a piece of symbolism too. "Like a dark room which has serpents all around, like that are we too". This moves the seed story further forward. And Samdahi says "Oh, you have become the listener of the very language of the crow."

TAREGAN

This book lacks complex plotlines or complicated symbols for the simple reason that it was written to instil good values in children.

But here, the whole story is a symbol. When Subhas Chandra Bose's father tells him that sleeping on the ground is not enough, it leaves a remarkable imprint on his mind. What this man did later for India is known to all. Satya Vidya Bhardwaj says that "Knowledge is bigger than heaven."

This collection is not only of importance in children's literature. It expands the horizons of seed stories too.

GEETANJALI

Chalu Uchitpur poem features a place called Uchitpur, where everyone has the same body language and the same clothing. In this land, there is no difference between fire and water.

The "new moonlike full moon" tells us many things about the deformed "bedhab roop".

Yaar Yau is a song of tragedy. It describes everything that has been washed away in a flood, including the washing away of the spirit and the sense of existence.

He dedicates the song to Sh. Rajnandan Lal Das's 'Yug-Yug', where he has described how all doors close when one is entrapped in a spiderweb.

This complete collection of the song is dedicated to Professor Udaya Narayana Singh Nachiketa'. All the songs in this collection are lyrical.

RAIT-DIN

Baba did not understand the mischief of the barren trees. He tilled and ploughed and planted the trees. But then those trees became the abode of dead souls. They did not touch the soil, reaching the sky by holding the top.

Halluk Kaaj (trans. easy work) details the technicalities of labour tools which make the work easy. It is an experience of satisfaction that the artists get after the completion of their work. How a world full of empathy is created, it describes that too.

Whether it is in Patta Chhimee's syrupy mental level or in "the huge-lad is condemned", the writer brings new and distinct typical Maithili verse. It makes Rait-Din distinct.

INDRADHANUSHI AAKASH

We listen as someone sings Nachari (Maithili songs about Lord Shiva Songs) while fully swinging his voice and body. The spirituals and supernaturals have found their places. One is assembling (or creating) and the other is disassembling. The change is a mere game.

The poet is incredibly careful in his selection of words and subjects. Mystery, disappointment, answers, along with questions and hope, all keep coming and going.

TEEN JETH EGARHAM MAAGH

In Ghare-Ghare every household is lit up by a diya, but the whole village is in darkness.

In Kaushal-Jakhain we are told why the land turned barren and how the dark village ended up in its sorry state.

In Aas Prem Sang, hope returns to the village.

SARITA

Here, Jagdish Prasad Mandal's verse keeps raising questions. It keeps on questioning.

His poetry shows a painful awareness of facts and constantly brings up questions, even in its conclusion.

If you compare his poetry with his prose, you will find much more pessimism in it, unlike his hope-filled prose. The short length of the poems does not give him time to analyse the questions, to find the answers. So, he keeps on raising questions and only questions, poking at the readers to look for the solutions themselves.

This type of verse is an intriguing first for Maithili literature.

ULBA CHAUR: Short Story, ShrutiPublication, New Rajendra Nagar, (New Delhi), 2013

It is a collection of thirteen short stories, every story of this collection depicts the ups and downs of life, it investigates the causes of the problems and puts forward solutions after giving it modernistic solutions.

ARDHANGINI: Short Story, ShrutiPublication, New Rajendra Nagar, (New Delhi), 2013

This is a collection of twenty short stories. He depicts vividly the distress that salaried people face. On the other hand, he compares it with the jovial life of the agriculturists. At the same time, he takes head-on the pseudo-beliefs and other social problems faced by the village people and offers solutions. He underlines the caste-based occupations and delineates their importance and necessity for maintaining a good life in villages.

SATBHAIYA POKHAIR: Short Story, ShrutiPublication, New Rajendra Nagar, (New Delhi), 2013

This book has so far been run into four editions.

BHAKMOR: Short Story, ShrutiPublication, New Rajendra Nagar, (New Delhi), 2013

The collection has nine short stories. The web ("ojhari") and other stories deal with the post-1947 period and deal with the degradation of democratic values and the deformation of public institutions.

NAI DHARAIYE: Novel, ShrutiPublication, New Rajendra Nagar, (New Delhi), 2013

This novel is the fulfilment of the religion of literary creation, which has been faithfully by the author. It reflects the face of society through its moving depiction of life.

KRANTIYOG: Short Story, PallaviPrakashan, Nirmali, Supaul, (Bihar), 2017

It contains six stories. The problem of drainage has arisen due to the construction of highways and link roads, high-plinth buildings, and houses. The damage to the environment and the problem of flood arising out of this have been depicted well. The number and area of ponds, well and orchards are declining. So, the thorny plants have abounded leading to a loss of harvest.

SUBHIMANI JINGI: Short Story, Pallavi Prakashan, Nirmali, Supaul, (Bihar), 2018

The author has vividly depicted the third gender problem. An adolescent Shyama is neither a male nor female, so the people, including the mother, decide to hand over Shyama to the Kinnars. But the father rose in favour of the boy and decides to provide him with all such skills necessary for a respectable life. He gives an example of Lord Shiva who is called half male and half female (Ardhanarishwar), and of Krishna who enters the group of females by transforming himself into Shivani. The mother, seeing the resolve, also comes on the side of her husband.

The problem of other sex, hitherto unknown in Maithili literature, has come to the attention of the author. Shyama is a child that is indisputable. Shyama has every right to live a dignified and respectful life and for that necessary skills are required and would be provided to him. The siblings convince the mother but after the stories of Shiva and Krishna are placed before her, she goes in repentance as to why she was not taught these stories earlier. The third sex, particularly in the village society, has been shown with a new perspective. Other stories of the collection also throw light on other aspects for example the issue of "Mathas" and asceticism in "Babak Bag-Bagiya" and the resolution of disputes in a village in "Kukurpan". In "Herayal

Jingi" the issue of development in the village post-independence has been described with the example of Kamalpur village, the issue of caste and faulty development model has been given a fresh treatment.

Subhimani Jingi (A respectful life) 2018 is a collection of short stories consisting of eight stories. The second short story is named Subhimani Jingi, which is the title of the book also. This book was written between the 23rd of January 2018 and the 9th of March 2018. Pallavi Prakashan has published this book, Nirmali. A night-long tri-monthly reading session of short stories (Sagar Rati Deep Jaray) is held in Maithili at different venues. The 97th such reading session was held on 24.03.2018 at Berma village in the convener ship of writer Sh. Kapileshwar Raut. This village happens to be the village of Sh. Jagdish Prasad Mandal also. On that occasion, this book was launched (released).

All eight stories of this book depict the constant changes in the life of a village person vividly.

The eight stories of this book consist of:

1. Kekra Lel Kelau: written on 23.01.2018

2. Subhimani Jingi: written on 28 Jan 2018

3. Babak Bag-Bagiya: written on 3 Feb 2018

4. Ab-Tab: written on 7 Feb 2018

5. Agilah: written on 11 Feb 2018

6. Kukurpan: written on 28 Feb 2018

7. Herayal Jingi: written on 5 Mar 2018

8. Asha Par Paani Phir Gel: written on 9 Mar 2018

1. Kekra Lel Kelau:

This short story begins with a conversation among people sitting around a bonfire on winter days. Bhogilal bhay is an Ayurvedic Doctor who is not able to keep his health well. His family also became disconcerted, all his family except his wife migrated to cities. The conversation goes on regarding the environment and other aspects of the socio-environment of village people, which has changed for some people who were not able to cope with it.

2. Subhimani Jingi

The author has vividly depicted the third gender problem. An adolescent Shyama is neither a male nor female, so the people, including the mother, decide to hand over Shyama to the Kinnars. But the father rose in favour of the boy and decides to provide him with all such skills necessary for a respectable life. He gives an example of Lord Shiva who is called half male and half female (Ardhanarishwar), and of Krishna who enters the group of females by transforming himself into Shivani. The mother, seeing the resolve, also comes on the side of her husband.

The problem of other sex, hitherto unknown in Maithili literature, has come to the attention of the author. Shyama is a child that is indisputable. Shyama has every right to live a dignified and respectful life and for that necessary skills are required and would be provided to him. The siblings convince the mother but after the stories of Shiva and Krishna are placed before her, she goes in repentance as to why she was not taught these stories earlier. The third sex, particularly in the village society, has been shown with a new perspective.

3. Babak Bag-Bagiya

This short story deals with the issue of "Mathas" and asceticism. Goverdhan Das was a poor child whose parents died while he was young. He becomes the successor of Mahant Gokul Das. Through his story, the author travels to the hinterland and presents the untouched states of village life. Through his gardens, the Baba was getting remembered but now these gardens are vanishing due to poor upkeep.

4. Ab-Tab:

The vegetable articles used during the village feast are the medium through which the author takes the issue of development affecting village life.

5. Agilah

Pakshadhar's Uncle returns to the village after retirement. Munilal is his cousin. Munilal's daughter is widowed. Munilal and his daughter Savitri are the objects through which Pakshadhar wants his reform agenda to go through.

6. Kukurpan

The method of resolution of disputes in the village is the subject matter in "Kukurpan". The resolution can be provided only by a person who is capable of being so.

7. Herayal Jingi

In "Herayal Jingi" the issue of development in the village post-independence has been described with the example of Kamalpur

village, the issue of caste and faulty development model has been given a fresh treatment.

8. Asha Par Paani Phir Gel

Lalit is a literate agriculturist. He starts farming sunflowers. Through his experiments, the author finds space for detailing actual problems faced by the agriculturists, the ravage of nature and so on.

DEKHL DIN: Short Story, PallaviPrakashan, Nirmali, Supaul, (Bihar), 2018

A family which is lived for three generations in a village and a family whose second generation has migrated to the town have been compared. The superiority of the former has been established in the title short story of the collection.

GAPAK PIYAHUL LOK: Short Story, PallaviPrakashan, Nirmali, Supaul, (Bihar), 2018

This is a collection of thirteen short stories. The title short story deals with have depicted the society existing at the time of the permanent settlement-Zamindars. The resources were held by a few, the system continued in Independent India. The people started capturing the lands resulting in litigation. The title short story depicts one such litigation involving thirty-five people along with Deenbandhu Kaka. On the day of the judgment of the case, there happened a bus accident which was carried.

LAHSAN: Novel, PallaviPrakashan, Nirmali, Supaul, (Bihar), 2018

BIRTHMARK (Lahsan): It is a story of a person from a village, who gets disenchanted with city life, where morality- both social and personal- has no meaning. It describes vividly the village and city life, and in that description, one finds no charm in city life for ordinary class people. Its plot revolves around personal upheavals, but the actual beauty of the novel lies in its vivid presentation of city and village life from the point of view of economically lower-class people.

RAHE JOKER PARIWAR: Short Story, PallaviPrakashan, Nirmali, Supaul, (Bihar), 2020

The loss of livelihood is the major reason for the migration from Mithila. But the people who migrate include the well-offs also who migrate for an easier life. So, thirty years ago, despite being well off Shantinath left Chanpur and migrated to Shati Niketan (Shanti- peace!!) in search of peace. And even when some people from his village found him, he had no regret. Unlike his

other books, this migration of the well-off in search for peace compares and depicts the tussle around the social life of Mithila.

GAMAK JINGI: Short Story, ShrutiPublication, New Rajendra Nagar, (New Delhi), 2009

This collection of short stories contains nineteen short stories. The author was given Tagore Literature Award (Sahitya Akademi) for this book. Every story in this book depicts the hardness of village life. The people have to bow before natural calamities. However, the people in these stories rebound without exception and refuse to let down or migrate.

MAULAYAL GACHHAK PHOOL: Novel, ShrutiPublication, New Rajendra Nagar, (New Delhi), 2009

It is his first novel which deals with the problem of migration from the villages. The novelist envisages the rejuvenation of worn-out systems which will stop migration.

UTTHAN-PATAN: Novel, ShrutiPublication, New Rajendra Nagar, (New Delhi), 2009

Even the laziest can move forward if he has a desire for economic improvement. Shyamanand brings technology to agriculture. Unity is essential if one has to stop the breaking of and migration from villages.

JINGIK JEET: Novel, ShrutiPublication, New Rajendra Nagar, (New Delhi), 2009

The writings which deal with village life are full of negative forces. The author puts a break on the disappointment arising out of such negative writings about village life.

TAREGAN: Inspirational Story Compilation, ShrutiPublication, New Delhi, 2010

This is children's literature and is a collection of 111 inspirational seed stories which includes the gist of some masterpieces from the world literature curated for the children.

JEEVAN-MARAN: Novel, ShrutiPublication, New Rajendra Nagar, (New Delhi), 2010

The spiritualism in the author comes to the fore, the real life would be the afterlife.

JEEVAN SANGHARSH: Novel, ShrutiPublication, New Rajendra Nagar, (New Delhi), 2010

The author compares two villages the Banspura, which he tells us is the less developed and the Sisauni, which is comparatively more developed. The comparison is based on the perception of developed and less developed among the people of the villages, which is the view of the author as well. The Sisauni people have a middle school, they have their Public Durga Pooja in their village and the fair is organized there. But the Banspura people have none of these although they do organize on an individual basis a 24-hour kirtan and public langars occasionally. But the Barharba village is more developed than these two villages. They have a High School, and they organize more public functions. And lo! Here comes the Katharba village. It is the most developed where besides the High School, there is a hospital also, and they organize several other public functions.

BAJANTA-BUJHANTA: Seed Story, Shruti Publication, New Rajendra Nagar, (New Delhi), 2013

This is a collection of sixty-eight seed stories which has been woven around different social issues. The ensuing social changes and upheavals going around the villages at the individual and social levels are the themes for the stories of this collection. ❑

CHAPTER 3

JAGDISH PRASAD MANDAL: THE PLAYWRIGHT

MITHILAK BETI (DAUGHTER OF MITHILA)

This is a drama dealing with the miserable life of daughters in the villages of Mithila. There are many forms of discrimination, the author has chosen the deformation of relations after the marriage of the female. The reason for it is enshrined in the unequal treatment between daughter and son from the day he or she is born. The play begins with an employee strike against inflation. The causes of inflation are a shift towards jobs as a result of the decline in agriculture which again is due to smaller land holdings, an increase in charity-like institutions (e.g., wedding ceremonies. misuse of money) and dowry. Art lovers despised wealth. Pickpocketing is on the rise. Prohibition on speech, increase in kidnappings, violence. The moral decline of government officials increased insecurity due to the weakening of the government system. The caste, community etc. contributes to the disintegration of society, thus endangering even honour. Under the influence of cinema and sports, the new generation is leaving everything behind- clan, family, and behaviour, and is going crazy in imitation of the outside world. The imprint of culture in the collapse of feudal lords. Wells and ponds are the places where women quarrel. Sita is the symbol of Mithila's female power. Society is under the influence of courts destroying wealth and morals, giving further rise to mutual quarrels. Lack of self-strength among youth, boundless patience among women,

the influence of society on children and widows everything has been depicted. The value of an educated (working) girl is ruined due to dowry. However, women are more important than men. The new enthusiasm among the new generation of women can be seen in their Jeal for acquiring new skills.

However, there is one more issue, the issue of feudal addiction has been depicted through the symbol of cannabis. The new generation is affected. They are not known for hard work. They believe in luck. The breakdown of families under the influence of wealth, the generational differences between father and son and forced marriages of boys and girls are the result of these. There is fraud in farm transactions, the dual registry of the same land can be seen, and bribery has gained acceptance. The parents want their sons to take the bribe. The adverse impact of multinational companies on agriculture. Dowry is a big issue, tradition and anti-tradition thoughts have engulfed the newly awakened society. Society is divided into factions, and the creation of new human identities is due to new technologies, new thinking and new work. The influence of multinational culture on families, society and arts and culture is imminent. Society is changing by changing the system. Money brings attitude.

All of this has led to the birth of a new society. Ramvilas gives importance to human beings which is a blow to dowry. The play ends with ideal marriage.

COMPROMISE

The depicts agriculture and peasant life and the breaking down of the feudal society. The need for proper arrangements for bringing agriculture to the centre stage of the new capitalist society and the depiction of the deteriorating condition of

villages due to the flight of intellectuals and workers has been attempted successfully. The stress is on the philosophy of cooperation.

JHAMELIYA BIAH (THE PROBLEMATIC MARRIAGE)

The play deals with various external influences that are seen in the process of marriage rituals in Mithila. Controversies and conflicts arise due to external influences. So, the discussion on the disputes tries to solve the marriage process as a puzzle.

BIRANGNA (THE SHE WARRIOR)

The influence of the market in the orientation of rural life, the exploitation by the capitalist class through cheap labour and as a result one is ready to do the lowest thing for the sake of money.

TAMAK TAMGHAIL (THE COPPER VESSEL)

The disintegrating family, customs and relationships can be seen in our feudal society which itself is disintegrating. The financial base of the family is in fragmentation.

SATMAAYA (THE STEPMOTHER)

No relationship is faulty but that cannot be said of human behaviour and thoughts. The ideal form of 'stepmother' is presented through these concepts.

KALYANI

The depiction of women's awakening through the mention of awareness towards day-to-day injustice delineates the basic problems. But the highest price has to be paid in the process.

SAMJHAUTA (AN AGREEMENT)

The description of the fundamental problems of agriculture along with solutions has been done intricately. ❑

CHAPTER 4

FIVE SHORT STORIES BY SH. JAGDISH PRASAD MANDAL

Sh Jagdish Prasad Mandal has adjudged the following five short stories as his best:

The Transmission (Sancharan)

The Favourite Work (Bhari Man Kaaj)

The Gone Hope (Aayal Aasha Chali Gel)

The Gift of Life (Jeevan Daan)

On My Behalf (Appan Sati)

The Transmission (Sancharan): The philosophical musings of the life of Jeebachh Uncle have been depicted with all their splendour. The earthly comes in between, of course. The flood and the dam, the hope generated out of the Kosi River project regarding hydel power electricity and the subsequent despair arising out of its non-fulfilment. The irrigation facility for the farmers, the arrival of fertilisers, the projects leading to disturbance in the flow of small rivers, the memory of earlier mango plantations in villages, and the rain-based agriculture, all have been dealt with in detail. After fifty Jeebachh Uncle dissociated from the family life dispassionately and handed over the responsibilities to both of his sons.

The Favourite Work (Bhari Man Kaaj): This story is the story of Gianchan. He is overwhelmed by his life, but then Sumitlal tells him a story and he feels relieved.

The Gone Hope (Aayal Aasha Chali Gel): The people of village Rudrapur are preparing to go to Rameshwaram for a pilgrimage. A discussion ensues between Hiralal and Motilal.

The Gift of Life (Jeevan Daan): Sumant and his wife is discussing life in the aftermath of an earthquake. Last week due to the earthquake all three houses collapsed.

On My Behalf (Appan Sati): This story is a story of a happening village surrounding the shops at the roundabout. The people and their priorities, minor squabbling and all are witnessed here.

Sh. Jagdish Prasad Mandal is known for giving Maithili stories which directly cater to the problems and solutions of the people of Mithila. The solution is there in the midst of the people and whoever finds the solution is the leader of his stories. And there is always one who finds the solution. He is better known for his stories which are anti-migration rather than anti-escapism. However, he has selected the above five short stories which are philosophical musings. But here also his priority is the people and their life. He says through Jeebach Uncle that the life of Jeebach Uncle was grand. So grandeur is not about money, but it is about the manner people live their lives. This grandeur of life has been depicted not through the lives of landlords but through the life of common people, who faces drought, flood, and negative results on the environment through the concept of neo-development, yet their demeanour is grand. ❑

CHAPTER 5

VERSE WRITING- JAGDISH PRASAD MANDAL

The poems of Jagdish Prasad Mandal started getting published in Videha eJournal (www.videha.co.in) and were later print-published as anthologies. His poems can be categorized under Philosophical, Temporal (Socio-Economics), Literary, Social, Revolutionary, Historical & General categories.

PHILOSOPHICAL POEMS

The following poems fall under this category:

MANA-MANI, CHALA RE JEEVANA, SAASU-PUTOHOO VAARTAA, BAURAAELA BATOHEE, APANE PARA HANSAI CHHEE, O DINA, DHOBI GHAATA, SAANJHA, SAATVIKA BHAVA, DIVYA SHAKTI, URIAAELA CHIRAI, RANABHOOMI, SAANA-DHAARA-DHAARAA, SATEE-BESHYAA, PAPEEHAAKA GEETA, VISHADHARAKA BEEKHA, MITHILAA KEHENA, MAUSAMAKA MUSKEE, AASHAA, AANKHI, MADHURASA, BEEAA, MAHAJAALA, BAATA, DABHIAAELA DAGARA, LAJJAITA, GANGAA VANDANAA, GANGA SNAANA, GANGAA NAHAAE, PHANAKEE, ANHARAAELA CHHEE, SABHA KICHHU CHHAI JAALEME, GODHANA POOJAA, MAATIKA PHOOLA, JHAGARAA, NAJARI, KAMALA DHAARA, BAALA KAVITAA, BHABHOOTA, JHOOTHA-SAANCHA, NAVA DUNIYAAN, AARATEE, PUROOSHAARTHA, SARASVATEE VANDANAA, BHEERA-BHAARA, SARASVATEE HAMARA.

O Dina vividly portrays fear arising out of a situation in difficult times, when one comes to know who their real friends are. Dhobi Ghaata is an imagery and life has been compared with it. Saanjha says that in life there is no evening, everything goes on at its speed. Saatvika Bhaava is a discussion on the true nature of mankind. Divya Shakti discusses divine power. Uriaaela Chirai is the symbol of the flying nature of mankind. Ranabhoomi compares theatre with the life of humans. Saana-Dhaara-Dhaaraa says that the dynamics of the individual buttresses dynamism in the family. Satee-Beshyaa describes the life of a chaste woman and a prostitute. Papeehaaka Geeta discusses life and death through the symbolism of a singing bird. Vishadharaka Beekha is the poison of a venomous snake, and it has been compared with the obstacles of life. Mithilaa Kehena is regarding countryside Mithila. Mausamaka Muskee compares seasons with the ups and downs of life. Aashaa is regarding hope in life. Aankhi compares the eye with other organs of the body. Madhurasa places the existence of life under the lens through the symbol of honey. Beeaa is a seed that has in it the hope and existence of life. Mahajaala compares the old pond with the old lifestyle and behaviour. Baata is a way of life which one has to create for oneself. Dabhiaaela Dagara is the thorny road through which one has to tread. Lajjaita is honourable life a respectable one.

Jagdish Prasad Mandal has written a few poems under the heading Song (Geeta) wherein he describes the sorrows, the revolving wheel of time, and how tough work can be made simple. He laments how humans are not treating their fellow humans in an egalitarian way as well as the art of thinking and understanding.

Under his Ganges songs is Gangaa Vandanaa where he describes the Ganges inside one as compared to the Ganga river. In Ganga

Snaana he compares the Ganges to ideological and Social parlance, in Gangaa Nahaae he describes the psyche of people revering to the Ganges. Phanakee describes the impulse under which even the clever get entangled. Anharaaela Chhee describes the chimaera when a wrong act seems correct under the wrong regimen. Sabha Kichhu Chhai Jaaleme says that everyone is estranged and deep down in the quagmire of the system. Godhana Poojaa describes the ways of the Goddess of wealth (Lakshmi) and Goddess of Learning (Saraswati). In Maatika Phoola he finds the smell of soil like a flower. Jhagaraa is a question-answer session of Lor Shiva and Goddess Parvati. Najari is a question-answer session between eye and viewpoint. Kamalaa Dhaara is a description of the Kamala river. Baala Kavitaa Najari is a question-answer session between the father and the son. Bhabhoota is a description of hegemony. Jhootha-Saancha says that to defend a lie one has to create hundreds of lies. Nava Duniyaan says that one oneself has to create one's world. Purooshaartha describes the true and pseudo aims of life. Sarasvatee Vandanaa vows to remain in an ever-awakened stage. Bheera-Bhaara exhorts one to walk through one's strength. Sarasvatee Hamara describes Goddess Saraswati who understands the sorrows of one and all.

TEMPORAL (SOCIO-ECONOMICS) POEMS

The following poems fall under this category:

AGAHANA, KENAA MET'ATA GAREEBEE, BAARHIKA SANESA, AGO-LORAHAA, HATHIYAAKA JHATAKEE, RAHASAA CHAURA, BEROJAGAAREE, LEERHEE POKHARI, BAKAREE BHERAAREE, MAHAGEE, JARANABICHHANEE, NAVA-PHALA, ANDEEKA CHHAAHARI, POO-BHARA, UNNATI- KISAANEE JEEVANAKA VIKAASAME BAADHAAKA KAARANA,

CHAUREE DHAANAKA KATANEE, KISAANA-TOOTAITA JINAGEE.

Agahana portrays the harvesting season. Kenaa Metata Gareebee describes the deserted cultivable land due to the condition of the poor. Baarhika Sanesa describes the gift of the flood like the waterborne plants and animals.

Ago-Lorahaa is the leftover harvest.

Hathiyaaka Jhatakee is the description of a season when wind accompanies rain. Rahasaa Chaura is a vivid description of the lowland. Berojagaaree says unemployment is a created problem. Leerhee Pokhari is a description of lichen filled pond and society has been compared with it.

Bakaree Bheraaree is the excreta of a goat, which is so fertile that it can feed plants. Mahagee describes a phenomenon when a big family was a boon but due to inflation it is now not considered so. Jarana Bichhanee is the people who collected fuel wood from the wild, whose condition is very bad and who do not have got any benefit out of independence.

Nava-Phala describes new kinds of work being undertaken by modern-day families.

Andeeka Chhaahari contrasts flood-raved vegetation with the vegetation of the desert. It also describes sandy terrain in both areas.

Poo-Bhara is a talk between son and mother when the son is set to leave his place for livelihood. Unnati deals with obstacles and problems in the life of people who want to live their life practising agriculture. Chauree Dhaanaka Katanee is a description of the difficulty in the harvesting of paddy in lowland

knee-down water-filled land. Kisaana compares the life of farmers through the ages. Tootaita Jinagee describes hopelessness in life.

LITERARY POEMS

The following poems fall under this category:

KAVITAA, BOORIBAKEE

Kavitaa describes a new preface, new direction and new way for the poem. Booribakee describes changing the meaning of foolishness in different situations.

SOCIAL POEMS

The following poems fall under this category:

GAACHHEE BHUTAAI, BHUTAAHI GAACHHEE, BEETALA BARKHAKA VIDAAI, SANGEE,BETHAA, DHABBAA, PITRIPAKSHAKA BHOJA, THANAKAA, JHAPAASAA, SHIVACHARANA, CHAUTHACHANDRAKA CHHAAMCHHEE, BHARADUTIYAA, DOOJAA BHAAVA, BAALA GEETA, PHOOSI, CHIKKANI MAATI, JHAAROO-BAARHANI, DAGAREEKA DAGARA, CHAPARAASEE BHAAYA, NOTA, LATUAA.

Gaachhee Bhutaai exhorts to demolish the way of life coming through tradition.

Bhutaahi Gaachhee reasons for the breakdown in family and society. In Beetala Barkhaka Vidaai the arrival of the new year has been compared with the ups and downs of life. Sangee says it's time to leave the friends. Bethaa explores the identity so that reason for sorrow can be found. Dhabbaa is spot an unblemished record due to some bad acts. Pitripakshaka Bhoja deals with the

question of caste. Thanakaa describes thunder. Jhapaasaa is warning not to come under the ill influence. Shivacharana became a good farmer in Shivacharana. Chauthachandraka Chhaamchhee deals with potters making earthen articles even in the rainy season for the festivals, but still people not giving credit to them. Bharadutiyaa describes the festival of brother and sister. Doojaa Bhaava describes the father and children relationship. Baala Geeta exhorts to build a new life. Phoosi deals with the habit of telling lies. Chikkani Maati is a fine-grained soil used to make earthen lamps in the Diwali festival, the mother-son duo is talking about that. Jhaaroo-Baarhani is regarding the use of cleaning equipment. Dagareeka Dagara is blowing the winnowing basket for warding off poverty on the morning of the Diwali festival. Chaparaasee Bhaaya is regarding a salaried person. Nota is an invitation to feast when either everyone from the families or one person per family is invited. Latuaa deals with life where nothing is more than just enough.

REVOLUTIONARY POEMS

The following poems fall under this category:

JEEBAILE LARAE PARATA, EKAISAMEE SHADEEKA DESHA, PARADESHEE,

Jeebaile Larae Parata says that for life one has to fight. Ekaisamee Shadeeka Desha depicts a 21st-century country. Paradeshee describes the motherland through the twelve months.

HISTORICAL POEMS

The following poems fall under this category:

PAICHHALAA GANITA, OMANA SENSE

Paichhalaa Ganita compares old and new mathematics.

GENERAL

The following poems fall under this category:

MADHUMAACHHEE, JUAANEE, TARANGA, AI PARHABASAM' MURAKHE RAHITAUM, NANGARAKAT'A GHORAA, GEETA, PHOOLABATIYAA, KARAILAAKA PHOOLA, GIRAHAKATA.

Madhumaachhee compares the life of a honeybee with that of mankind. Juaanee describes youth. Taranga is the depiction of inner emotions. Ai Parhabasam Murakhe Rahitaum laments education which does not help in employment. Nangarakata Ghoraa is a tailless horse who is like a man having faith in none. Under Songs, there are a few poems which describe the spring season and life of honesty. Phoolabatiyaa is a nascent seed plant and it has been compared with the hope that life has. Karailaaka Phoola is a bitter gourd but its flower smells pleasant. Girahakata is the fraud who is omnipresent in the system. ❑

CHAPTER 6

THE EPILOGUE: ERA BEFORE AND AFTER: LITERARY SCENE IN MAITHILI AFTER THE ARRIVAL OF JAGDISH PRASAD MANDAL

Amartya Sen wrote about the famine of Bengal (1942-43), talking about how lacs and lacs of people died in that famine (15 lacs as per estimates of the Famine Enquiry Commission), but that this did not include his loved ones. Likewise in 1967, there happened a great famine in Mithila. When Indira Gandhi (then the Prime Minister of India) visited the area, she was shown how the people from the Mushhar community survived simply by eating bisarh (roots of lotus and other plants).

But this tragedy was written about only in 2009 by Sh. Jagdish Prasad Mandal, over forty years after it happened. And the reasons for that delay are obvious. In Maithili literature, there is a lopsided tendency which has made its journey slanted and ugly. The ones writing for mainstream Maithili literature have had no firsthand experience of tragedies of this magnitude, so they could never write on such subjects.

The coming of Jagdish Prasad Mandal on the literary scene simultaneously started a renaissance and a reformation movement in Maithili literature. It commenced a shiny new era. He gets credit for correcting the dark and ugly course the literary scene had taken. He gets credit for filling the gap and correcting

the lopsided course of Maithili literature, which was hitherto moving on a one-way road.

Jagdish Prasad Mandal is an artist. He can convey the facts in such an amazing way that the reader is left in a trance.

He can present the facts directionally and purposefully. Armed with this ability he has defined the literature of the Maithili language so greatly that we could bifurcate its history into two eras: the era before Jagdish Prasad Mandal, and the era which comes after.

His facts are collated from every section of society. They are not placed in his prose as ornaments. Instead, they flow naturally.

It is as if a high tide has shaken the coastlines of the so-called main drain of Maithili literature, which dies completely but then regains its shape during the monsoon.

His words never present a lament. His writing never shirks from its responsibilities. No matter what hardships they face, the characters never lose hope or blame their lack of resources; they never grow dismal and resolutely keep marching on.

He has respect for the lifestyles and contributions of every stratum of society, and that is very exceptional. This becomes effective because there is no mismatch between his words and his deeds, and this is because of the greatness of his personal and social life. What he thinks, what he does, and what he writes. It makes his literature truthful.

The ups and downs of the lyrical voice of the Maithili language attracted even the great Yehudi Menuhin who, in a BBC programme, said it was one of the sweetest languages. He talked of how his entire body swung hearing this language. Jagdish

Prasad Mandal uses the ups and downs of this lyrical/rhythmic language to show the affinity of mutual dependence with its society and culture.

This will bring revolution not only in literature but also in the economic arena.

❑❑❑

Notes